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ECHOES

justice, peace and creation news

BUT WHAT OF THE CHILDREN?

in addition: ecumenical reactions to September 11th

Echoes From Elsewhere

An Introduction To Echoes Magazine In Reactions, Facts and Issues From All Over The World

Religious leaders call for tolerance, peace and a focus on children

NEW YORK, 13 September 2001 - Leaders representing various faiths led an international gathering of UN staff, diplomats, religious and non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives and others in a non-denominational service at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City.

The Annual Interfaith Service of Commitment to the Work of the United Nations was dedicated to those who had been lost in this week's tragedy in the United States and to their loved ones. The Service was originally intended to honour the UN Special Session on Children, 19-21 September, now postponed.

The message from the dozens of religious and spiritual leaders who addressed the gathering was clear: It is essential to give comfort and compassion to those affected by the tragedy; emphasise tolerance and peace going forward; and focus on children as the key to building the future.

"We live in a world where insecurity and suffering is spreading at breathtaking speed – quickened by an upsurge in armed conflict that has already left 2 million children dead and 6 million wounded in the last decade alone," said UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy. "But in these trying times, let us never forget that in every child who is born, the potentiality of the human race is born again."

UN conference ends amid claims that it was overtaken by political deals

Durban (ENI). Following frantic through-the-night negotiations, the World Conference Against Racism ended [...] a day later than scheduled, having agreed a form of words on Israel and on slavery, the most contentious issues before the gathering. According to the deal, hammered out in negotiations between the European Union and the Arab-African bloc, slavery and slave trading were declared crimes against humanity while direct criticism of Israel as a racist state was dropped in the final declaration. The EU was not willing to brand racism or past, trans-Atlantic slave trading as crimes against humanity for fear that this would unleash court cases against countries such as Britain and the United States.

Child prostitution in Thailand is "racism", pastor tells UN conference

Durban (ENI). Children lured into Thailand's sex tourism trade are mostly drawn from the country's Indigenous minorities, a pastor has told the United Nations World Conference against Racism, taking place in South Africa. A five-minute video of the children, brought to Durban by the Rev. Sirirat Pusurinkham, has shocked hundreds of delegates to the conference, which has otherwise been dominated by high-level political wrangling over Zionism and about reparations for the transatlantic slave trade.

Religious and state leaders call for end to anti-Muslim violence

New York/London/Amsterdam (ENI). In spite of efforts by church leaders and public officials in many countries to head off potential anti-Muslim sentiment in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks in the United States, tension has been on the increase in several places around the world. In the United States, members of the US Muslim community have praised national and city officials for issuing strong words against intolerance aimed at Muslims and Arab Americans, but continue to be worried about new outbreaks of violence. In Britain, incidents of harassment and abuse of Muslims, and damage to mosques, have also been reported, but the country has so far been spared large-scale anti-Muslim protests.

Table of Contents

Editorial 3

Building a better world... and not just for children 4
Razia Ismail, India

Wars against Children 10
Graça Machel

Christianity, Children & sex 16
Ron O'Grady

Children in the Church 20
Judith Jarvis

Child trafficking in Albania, "Save the Children" report 24

Voices of children & poems 27

Children, alcohol and drugs 30
Anders Hagglund

Statements by children 33
2 statements made for the 10th anniversary of the UN convention for the rights of the child
Patricia Cruzado Muñoz & Arnold Engel

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 38

Links to web sites on children 42

A faith-rooted response to terrorism: 44

Letter to UN secretary-general 45
Konrad Raiser

Letter to President Bush from churches in Asia(CCA) 47

Being Church today in Africa 48
Sam Kobia

Behind the news 49
Visions for peace - voices of faith

Sisters 50
Betty Ruth Lozano

Publications & announcements 54-55

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Editorial

Echoes
justice, peace and creation news

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Publisher:
The Executive Director of the cluster on "Issues and Themes"
Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia

Publication Staff Team:
Susie Harrison Labiad, Bob Scott, Aruna Gnanadason

Layout and design:
Marie Arnaud Snakkers

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All correspondence and inquiries should be directed to:

Justice, Peace & Creation Echoes
World Council of Churches
P.O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland

Telephone: 022 - 791 61 11
Telefax: 022 - 791 64 09
E-Mail: sh@wcc-coe.org
Web: www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/echoes.html

"They are like that. One must not hold it against them. Children should always show great forbearance towards grown up people."

The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1944

It is not easy to write an editorial for this issue of Echoes, as the sounds of war deafen our ears. When I heard the news report of the death of two more children in war, this time in Afghanistan, I realised this editorial could not be what would normally be written for an issue of Echoes. I wondered to myself what goes on in the minds of millions of children all over the world as they live in daily contexts of violence or under the shadow of war. I wondered how they perceive our anxieties as adults as we reflect on the situation in our world. I decided therefore, to remind us of some of the questions that children should rightfully ask us at this time and reflected too on the ways in which we sometimes so carelessly (or perhaps helplessly) answer them..

On their daily experiences of violence……

What shall we tell our children when they ask why everything in their world seems to be going wrong?

Shall we tell them not to worry….that everything will be alright?

What shall we tell those children who live in a context of deprivation – daily worrying about food, clothing and shelter?

Shall we tell them, that this is life, and that they should thank God for the small blessings that they enjoy?

What shall we tell a child whose father has just been retrenched and whose mother's low paying job cannot get enough food on the table?

Shall we tell her to give up her education and look out for work?

What shall we tell the child who lives on the streets and lives dangerously, expecting police violence or other forms of violence every night?

Shall we tell him to be patient, and if he works hard and is not lazy, that he will have a change of luck?

What shall we tell a child who is lured into prostitution, is then trafficked from one country into another and who longs for her family and her childhood?

Shall we tell her to wait till she grows up, because then she can fight for her legal, economic and social rights?

What shall we tell a child who watches her mother being beaten by her father, or being driven out of their home in his drunken rage?

Shall we tell her not to take this seriously because there are much graver forms of violence in the world?

What shall we tell a child who sees her people being discriminated against because of their race, caste or colour, their Indigenous origins or their ethnic identity?

Shall we tell her to overlook such discrimination and hope that she will be one of the few lucky ones who make it in an unjust world?

What shall we tell our children who are sexually abused by someone they trust and look up to – a parent, a teacher, a care-giver or even a clergyman?

Shall we tell them not to exaggerate, or to remain silent, because no one will believe them anyway?

What shall we tell a child who is taught that her religion is the right way and that all others worship false Gods?

Shall we teach her to remember this always, and to grow up with a sense of arrogant triumphalism rather than with thankfulness for the rich plurality that God bestows on us?

What shall we tell the child who asks where all the clean air, the many diverse forms of fauna and flora, the sparkling streams, the sandy beaches and beautiful snow capped mountains are slowly disappearing to?

Shall we tell her not to care, but to continue to live life to the full, and watch silently as we extract more and more from the resources of the earth?

And under the shadow of war……..

What shall we tell those children who are made to believe that their nation is strong and that war is the only way in which peace can be achieved and justice won?

Shall we tell them to stay calm and not fear the future, even if those preparing for war are unable to guarantee their security?

What shall we tell our children when they ask why some wars are considered just and other wars are seen as unacceptable?

Shall we tell them that we live in a world of grave injustice, where the powerful call the shots and believe they have the right to make such claims?

What shall we tell our children when they ask why they cannot play with toy guns or with video-games which teach them how to kill or to target tall buildings, while the news on the TV shows them adults doing just that with real guns and real planes?

Shall we tell them to just listen to us because as adults we know what is right and what is wrong?

What shall we tell those children who are not allowed to go out and play, because they could be the targets of a stray bullet, a land mine or a cluster bomb?

Shall we tell them that one day the world will be a safer place for them?

What shall we tell our children who are made to watch their mothers being raped, fathers shot to death or brothers abducted and forcibly inscripted into resistance forces?

Shall we tell them not to be traumatised, that life has to go on and that they will outlive their pain and terror?

What shall we tell the child who is inducted into an army and is made to carry a gun and is taught to kill or maim, or to rape and pillage?

Shall we tell him to put his weapon down and get a decent life?

What shall we tell our children who live in tents in refugee camps all their lives?

Shall we tell them that one day they will be free to return to their homeland and to their own homes?

What shall we tell our children when they ask what Christmas is really about?

Shall we have the courage to tell them who the Christ-Child really is – God with us, ushering in peace and justice into the world?

Children have the right to know – the world they live in today is theirs. We have a responsibility to offer them honest answers. But more than that, we have to put an end to all the violence, put an end to this war and all wars, without making any compromises. The children of the world deserve a safe world and a just future. Violence can never be the answer, it can never be the last resort. How can we strengthen the culture of peace with justice for the children of the world?

Aruna Gnanadason
Justice, Peace and Creation team coordinator and Programme Executive for Women's concerns

Building a better world and not just for children

BY RAZIA SULTAN ISMAIL

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What is the condition of the children of the world today? Are their rights secure ? And if they are not secure, what should be expected of religious people ? Do they have a role, a duty, a stake in the well-being of children ? The subject before us is two-fold – and neither of its dimensions is simple.

What is the condition of child rights? It is a little like what Jean-Jacques Rousseau said: "Man is born free, and everywhere is found in chains." A UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, now 10 years old, has been signed, ratified and accepted by every nation under the sun except two (the United States of America, and Somalia). Among those entrusted with the responsibility of guiding society, there exist religious people, some of whom speak out on the need for humanity to defend what is good in the world. Yet everywhere, we find children in peril for one reason or another.

The formation of a global network of religions for children is an initiative to protect and defend the best interests of the child. In vowing to secure this protection for every child, such a network takes upon itself a difficult challenge. For what does the well-being of children imply?

The initiative is the brainchild of the Arigatou Foundation of Japan, a Buddhist movement pledged to public service. The "First Forum" meeting called by the Arigatou Foundation in May 2000 in Tokyo launched the network and its message. It focussed on four key rights of every child: the right to grow up free of fear; the right to a dignified and wholesome life; the

right to receive a proper education; the right to a healthy growth environment.

In the context of these four, and the fact that few children can be assured fair opportunity to enjoy these rights, the May forum challenged religious people to consider what should be expected of them. The forum yielded the Tokyo statement and declaration of purpose. It also posed many difficult questions.

Now the questions come to us, here in India, where so many of the world's children, – and so many of the world's poor, struggle to live with at least a modicum of security and dignity. If the condition of children is unacceptable, what should be expected of religious people?

Is there something such people could do that they have not already tried? Are religious people miracle workers? For what is it if not transformation that is needed? And for this, will not all people who have any faith in anything have to upset and upturn their understanding of what is acceptable in our world ? In the interests of any child, and especially the least served and least supported.

the right to grow up free of fear; the right to a dignified and wholesome life; the right to receive a proper education; the right to a healthy growth environment.

Our enquiry could focus on whether every child should enjoy improved and sure access to health, nutrition, education, shelter and all the other facets of care, as well as protection from insecurity – no matter what the state of the world at large may be. Surely children deserve this much.

But for people of faith, the enquiry could as well begin with the hypothesis that it is not only the little world of the child's immediate survival, health and safety that has to be changed; it is the world's overall character that cries out to be rescued and transformed. So our understanding of what is acceptable in our world would then mean the world not just as it affects children, but for everyone.

The present condition and future prospects for children depend on far more than the UN Convention that has been written for them. Much else must change. Otherwise we help our children through their childhood years but leave them a damaged world to live in.

What is gained for either the world or its people by ensuring *some* children good food, secure shelter and a cheerful schoolroom, and filling their minds with hatred and disdain for anyone unlike themselves ?

The question expands the canvas beyond the specific boundaries within which we perceive the child. But it is necessary to position the issue in reality. The child lives in a world, not in a separate space. The world is beset by many sicknesses, and four of its worst ills are hatred, arrogance, greed and division. If the world cannot be helped to seek a cure for these, humanity will fade and human rights will founder.

The pursuit of child rights is thus part of a larger effort for a deeper cause. Development with justice cannot be based on feeding the greed of a few but disregarding the needs of the many. Peace cannot be gained if the weak must compromise their hopes. A sick world cannot protect its children.

The world needs renewal, not repair.

So religious people, priests or lay believers, must understand the implications of being asked for a dedication to practising faith for the child's sake.

There is a tendency for religious leaders to commit themselves and their congregations to praying for the oppressed and the deprived. Perhaps it should be

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recognised that there are other actions requiring the religious persons' energies. So the next question arises: what should religious persons do by way of practice, for the benefit of children?

> We gave development into the hands of shopkeepers, and war and peace into the hands of arms manufacturers.

If they can assemble in support of children's rights, religious people must also find the capacity to move forward together to cross new boundaries. The capacity – and the anger. It is time for people of faith to see that there is cause for anger, and become angry.

The basic fact that conferences need to be called to ask these questions, that a global network of the kind initiated by the Arigatou Foundation should be at all necessary, that special conventions should be drawn up in defence of children, is an acknowledgement of the need for anger. This is the very kind of anger that moved nations and people through the 1990 World Summit on Children, the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 Conference on Human Rights, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and Fourth World Conference on Women – and was frustrated at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.

Angola© Peter Williams / WCC

It is the same kind of anger that makes people like Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela give up whatever might be their conventional career paths and move instead to upset the status quo. It is the same kind of anger that can impel ordinary people to confront the status quo because it is so manifestly unjust to so many.

It was probably Gandhi who called this "constructive anger." Such anger is necessary. Despair is no use; responsible citizens cannot yet be ready to succumb to despair anyway. And passive hope is also no use. Even when the times demand it, bad things do not go away by themselves.

Prayer is one of the priorities that the Global Network advocates: prayer for children who suffer, prayer for children who die before their time. Prayer is an expression of faith as well as hope. But it cannot suffice. Faith, like justice and honesty, has to be practiced.

Passive hope ranks high among the risks whenever justice eludes society. It keeps people inert when they should be mobilising. And it can delude.

Another risk is that of limiting one's vision to a narrow understanding of what some people in the United Nations call "do-able". This ugly word makes people accept partial justice. Equally, it can make them focus their energies on symptoms instead of whole issues and underlying causes. Dealing with symptoms does not suffice. The real sickness persists, and recurs.

People who perceive the need for a revolution do not dream or plan at a strictly do-able level. They have to at least dream the seemingly impossible. A genuine vision sets new horizons. It redefines the destination. It is for something like this that humanity must strive.

The lesson concealed in the plight of the child is essentially this. If we do not strive to radically change the status quo, we have condemned this 21st Century from its birth, and sentenced our children to a bleak and bitter future. It is a dangerous moment in our lives, and in the history of our world. We cannot just hope to pass through it. We must become constructively angry.

At what should our anger be directed? To put it very simply, at the fact that development has become a business matter instead of a matter of justice. At the fact that war and peace – and the choice between them – have become a business matter. In both arenas, people have become a commodity. This is unacceptable. Why do we accept it? Are children a commodity? Are people, the poor, a commodity? Or consumers? Or cannon fodder? Why do we accept that they be considered as such?

How strongly do thinking people, people of faith, people of conscience, feel about this? And how strong do they feel themselves at the prospect of acting for

> The legacy of hate education does not go away by laying down a rifle or switching off a game.

change? Such action would have to be a crusade to achieve a new political and social will in the world. And this could only be done by active moral force. A dangerous proposition, far beyond a call for immunisation or opening a school in a slum, or introducing kindness into an orphanage.

Religious people are at risk in joining a genuine global network of religions for children. Joining a global network of this kind is not a journey into tranquillity. Just the opposite.

The world's past performance in making the planet a better home for our children is not good. As the world's six billion inhabitants taste the 21st Century, one third of them do so in abject poverty. There are more refugees and migrants among them than ever before. It is a moment to turn back for a clear look at what we have done and see what has brought us to this present day.

The 20th Century was not notable for its adherence to either compassion or justice. It was a century of great discovery, and many marvellous milestones of knowledge. But was it a century of wisdom? Was it a century of love? So many pages of the book of the 1990s record mistakes and misdeeds.

We tried, twice, to unite the world's nations. But how many times did we go to war, in big and little battlefields? We created the phenomenon of mass refugee populations, and made portraits of starvation and high-tech "smart" bombardment into new art forms for families to enjoy as they sit before their TV sets at home. We comforted ourselves with occasional charity, but where was empathy? We found the word "solidarity", but failed to recognise what it means.

We gave development into the hands of shopkeepers, and war and peace into the hands of arms manufacturers. We adopted the idea that a unifying world order could be born, but are condemning the new infant to malformation and sickness because we have mistaken "global" to mean the same thing as "international". We did not perceive the crucial difference – that "international" states the character and possibility of coexistence without surrendering individuality.

We did not perceive, or it was convenient not to. The sovereignty and integrity of many nations is at stake because of debt, because of economic or political pressure. Today, maps and boundaries are on the gambling tables again, and the dice seem to be loaded. The traders' invasions gain speed and strength meanwhile. And their advertising is so good that we even welcome them.

Brazil © Pierre Virot / WHO

What must we do now?

Children and adults alike are in jeopardy. Livelihoods are being lost. So are identities. Countries whose own sovereignty is unassailable say nationalism with borders is out of date. Who will preach the UN Charter to them? If the United Nations is tottering, who will rediscover the moral principles of justice, and coexistence, and give voice to them? Is it not we – responsible citizens, religious persons, constructively angry people – who must do this?

What is the present condition of child rights? Since the early 1980s, world reports from UNICEF provide annual reminders of unmet needs, some gains and many gaps, new risks. The challenge list persists: hunger, primary education for all, polio eradication, eliminating measles, overcoming Vitamin A deficiency, combating anaemia, beating maternal mortality and low birth-weight, refocussing family planning, salt iodisation, access to sanitation, HIV/AIDS, forced labour, exploitation and abuse.

Since 1996, UNICEF has highlighted the problems children face in industrialised countries, with absent fathers, sexual exploitation, solo mothers struggling on the poverty line, mounting crime and violence, and child abandonment. Also in 1996, it announced its "anti-war agenda", underlining the growing risks to children in conflict zones. In 1998, it reported the fifth consecutive year of "aid fatigue" in the industrial na-

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tions, and falling figures in development assistance. As the 1990s ended, UNICEF data showed much of Africa, Asia and Latin America living on less than a dollar a day. It also reported 27 per cent of Russian children and 26 per cent of US children living in poor families, and 21 per cent in Britain and Italy. About 540 million children are reported at risk in areas burdened by conflict, post-war insecurities or natural disasters.

Now UNICEF is calling on nations and societies to espouse a "new global agenda for children". How can this come into force when the global agenda for adults remains unchanged?

[...]

The United Nations' five-year and 10-year reviews of development have come and gone. On population, on women, on education, on the eradication of poverty through social development. The new documents recording review outcomes, updated promises, deferred deadlines and deflated funding pledges sound as hollow as they are. Meanwhile, the condition of children can be seen in statistics of continuing suffering, want and denial. In some countries, an eight-year-old child can be forced to testify in court, in others, eight years is old enough for prostitution. In one, under-five mortality from diarrhoea and water-related gastric ailments has risen 1,400 per cent in 10 years because of economic sanctions.

There is published data on the places where little boys are conscript soldiers and little girls are slave labour in the sex trade. All of these terrible facts and figures are true. Some of them are true because of poverty and rising debt burdens, and economic constraints that some societies and nations face. Some of them are the bitter fruit of exploitative power politics within and across borders. Some of them are true because of persistently negative culture and tradition. The data cited here is only illustrative of the condition of children in different parts of the world.

The advocacy role of religious leadership in pushing for changes in law, policy, programme and investment in these areas is self-evident. Informed pressure is possible and necessary.

But these poor conditions are effects, not causes. The little boy soldiers forced into uniform and taught to kill, just like the children who play video war games, are products of societies that teach them how to hate. The legacy of hate education does not go away by laying down a rifle or switching off a game. Little children who only watch warfare on television in the safety of their homes are learning that it is right for "bad people" to die for their sin of being "other". The most sinister world order is not new: it is the order of "us" and "them". We see this in the international arena, and we see it at home. And there is never any room in our chosen space for any of "them".

Does it not therefore become essential to look at the whole issue of the child's condition as a facet of the human condition, position it in the frame of values, and measure it as a spin-off of the basic issue of human worth?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out four spheres for action: survival, development, protection and participation. But the essential terms are

> The world will not change by our being kind to children. If the world changes, we will be kind, and fair, to children too.

humanity, justice, respect and love. This is a normative frame that tells us how the inhabitants of Planet Earth might regard one another. This is the territory of religious people.

[...]

The Convention on child rights also assumes, as do many contemporary international instruments and statutes, that adults will continue to clash between and among themselves. It assumes violence and the use of force. It assumes that might and material power will often prevail. It assumes race and class divisions and disparities. It then goes on to seek assurance that no matter how many heads are broken, and who oppresses whom, children should be protected from the worst effects. Conflict and brutality are not suitable for children.

Seen from the child survival standpoint, this is a life-saving, life-guarding approach. This may well be mature and realistic. But it can only result in patchwork solutions. For it evades value judgement. The world will not change by our being kind to children. If the world changes, we will be kind, and fair, **to children too**. It will change only when, and if, the four-fold frame of values is honoured and upheld. This is what religious people must address.

The principle of profit, with its side-bars of profitability, cost-effectiveness, economic viability and respect for market forces, has pushed aside the principle of well-being. Good management of development services is an undisputed need, but the social sector and the state's obligation to serve the people carry their own kinds of profit. Is the good health of a child profit? Is the money and time spent in a government clinic to save the life of a sickly infant born to impoverished parents in an overpopulated country cost-effective or profitable? Is it efficient and cost-effective for an education ministry to pay extra for a woman teacher to be posted to a remote village so that the little girls there can get five years of schooling? Is it more efficient to save that salary and let the girls learn cooking at home instead?

Is such investment profitable? Profitable to whom? Profitable in what sense? The question should really be: is it acceptable not to make such investments ? Justice – social, economic, political – has to be declared profitable. Who will make this declaration? People of faith have to have the courage to speak out.

[...]

Nations that have pledged to invest in their children can be handicapped by externally imposed economic reforms that imperil their poorer citizens' livelihoods, and make a mockery of their socio-economic policies. The condition and the prospects for children's rights are affected by such factors. Many nations of the South tried to report this slide-back at the June 2000 UN five-year review of what happened to social development and poverty eradication since 1995. Many nations of the North have been deaf to these reports. Who will speak out for a restoration of justice to the development agenda? Is this not the task before people of good conscience?

[...]

Brazil © Bob Scott / WCC

It is in the realm of socio-cultural values and religious teaching that human rights, justice and love must be propagated... and have not been. The concept of one humanity is far more important than that of one economic order. This concept is critically linked to the concept of diversity. The equal worth of diverse peoples, cultures and systems is crucial to recognise. One humanity cannot mean that everyone should be the same and live uniform lives based on uniform rules, but that their value should be equal and equally acknowledged, and equally protected.

At the international level, the UN Charter is the instrument of protection – but only *de jure* today. The UN Covenant on the Right to Development exists, but has not risen to statutory force. The 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights, its strength reinforced by the 1993 Vienna Conference, stands as the international safeguard for the equal and inalienable human rights and fundamental freedoms of the individual. But people oppress people, and nations oppress nations. Who speaks out? Who preaches and propagates equal worth, at any level? The hour has come to renew, or even create, the gospel of coexistence, without compromise.

In 1945, the new-born United Nations enshrined in proud stone the promise that we would convert swords into ploughshares. But we developed amazing and terrible new weapons instead. We promised to save the earth and its natural resources, but we allow the buying and selling of rain-forests, and the stealing of ownership of seeds from poor men's fields and trees. We kept up the claim that the pen is mightier than the sword but we discovered that we could slit our enemies' throats just as effectively by waging telecast wars that could damage and destroy by remote control. And we have continued to fight over who owns God, and who defiles His name – as if any of us had been given the divine right to decide this.

The Christian scriptures say that God's house has many mansions, suggesting room for all. The Muslim scripture tells us that God opens many doorways, suggesting that there may be many paths. Who preaches these texts? If we believe at all in the dream of harmony, we must do this. The Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, who have all have learned how to kill and who all profess divine dispensation, need to hear, and to relearn. The fat powers of the world, busy directing the liberalisation and globalisation of the thin nations, need to rediscover humility.

[...]

What should be expected of religious people? We face this challenging question not as religious leaders, although there may be some among us, but as ordinary men and women who believe in some force greater than themselves, divine or moral, and who strive to work for the good of others. People who refuse to give up an inner conviction that love and justice can prevail, and that there must be some way of safeguarding good and improving the world.

[...]

In formulating a mandate for faith, knowledge or progress, the *wellbeing of the child* is a good measure of sincerity and worth. For a mandate that would serve children, there must be a set of non-negotiable principles for people-centred and just development, by which we could work. In 1998, the Baha'i International Community proposed three spiritually based indicators for development: equity and justice, unity in diversity, and gender equality. It called for adherence to trustworthiness, moral leadership and independent investigation of truth. It is a challenge and an obligation to place these in the balance with profitability, cost benefits and market wisdom. The fate of the world depends on how honestly it is done.

And again the question: what should be expected of religious people ? Words are never sufficient, yet the right words are necessary. Religious people must help to restore a vocabulary for justice and humanity and renew the validity of love and respect as serious principles for human attitudes and human dealings. They must join in the struggle to retrieve the world's affairs from the traders who have taken possession of them. They must re-state the fact that development must mean justice, that peace must mean respect for difference. In a world bristling with weapons of destruction, the only armoury they can draw upon is moral force. Can people who uphold faith pledge to exert this?

[...]

The Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore once said: "Every child that is born comes into the world with the message that God has not yet despaired of mankind." His words have compelling immediacy. Today's people must not let the world continue to be such that God might well feel justified in despairing of the human race. The first action must be to re-link development with justice. Then religion and science will know their place and play their roles for the good of all humanity. The poor will regain hope and conquer poverty. And all our children will at last be safe.•

Extracted from a concept statement and working paper of Razia Sultan Ismail, for a Policy Consultation, New Delhi, 21 December 2000. Ms Razia Sultan Ismail is International Convenor and Charter Member of the Women's Coalition for Peace and Development and Former President of the World Young Women's Christian Association.

Wars against children

UN report calls for action to protect children from armed conflict

BY GRAÇA MACHEL

More and more of the world is being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum. This is a space devoid of the most basic human values; a space in which children are slaughtered, raped, and maimed; a space in which children are exploited as soldiers; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality.

Millions of children are caught up in conflicts in which they are not merely bystanders, but targets. Some fall victim to a general onslaught against civilians; others die as part of a calculated genocide. Still other children suffer the effects of sexual violence or the multiple deprivations of armed conflict that expose them to hunger or disease. Just as shocking,

thousands of young people are cynically exploited as combatants.

In the past decade, around two million children have been killed in armed conflict, three times as many have been seriously injured or permanently disabled, and countless others have been forced to witness or even to take part in horrifying acts of violence. Why are children so brutally exposed during modern warfare – not just accidentally but as deliberate targets? All of today's wars are being fought not between States but within them. And in many cases religious and ethnic affiliations are being manipulated to heighten feelings of hatred or aggression – against children as well as adults. Battles are fought from village to village and from street to street. As a result, the proportion of war victims who are civilians has leapt in recent decades from five per cent to over 90 per cent and at least half of these are children.

In addition, children are being deliberately recruited as combatants. This has been made easier by the proliferation of light weapons. Assault rifles are cheap and widely available, thanks to the international arms trade. In Uganda, an AK-47 can be purchased for the cost of a chicken. Previously, the more dangerous weapons were heavy or complex, but these guns are so light that children can use them, and so simple that they can be stripped and reassembled by a child of ten.

Coupled with the rapid social change which often precedes or accompanies war, armed conflict leads to a breakdown in the family support systems so essential to a child's survival and development. Other forms of protection also slip away, particularly government and community support systems. As a result, children are being denied the protection promised them in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. War violates every right of a child – the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to the development of the personality, and the right to be nurtured and protected.

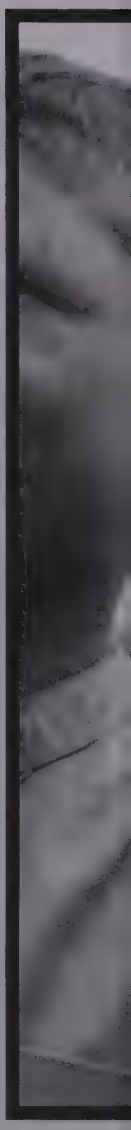
The youngest soldiers

Children are affected by warfare in many ways, but one of the most alarming trends is their participation as soldiers. A series of 24 case studies, indicates that government or rebel armies have recruited tens of thousands of children. Most are adolescent boys, but many are girls, and some recruits are 10 years or younger. Many of these are forcibly recruited, seized from the streets, or even from schools or orphanages. Others are driven to join armed groups by fear or poverty, believing that this is the only way to achieve some protection from the violence around them or to be sure of regular meals, clothing or medical attention.

Child soldiers often start out in support functions. Boys serve as porters or as messengers. Girls may prepare food or attend to the wounded – though they also may be forced to provide sexual services or be 'married off' to other soldiers. However, both boys and girls are soon forced onto the battlefield where their youth and inexperience leave them particularly vulnerable.

Often they are unaware of the real dangers they face; they may even forget to take cover. In a number of cases children have been deliberately exposed to horrific scenes to harden them to violence. Some have even been forced to commit atrocities against their own families as a way of severing all ties with their communities.

UNICEF calls for a global campaign to stop the recruitment of anyone under 18 into armed forces and to encourage governments and opposition groups to immediately demobilise all such children. It recommends that all peace agreements specifically address the need to demobilise and reintegrate child soldiers back into society. It also calls on all governments to support the ready conclusion and adoption of a draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that would establish the minimum age of recruitment and participation as 18 years.



Children in flight

Around the planet there are millions of children who have been forced to flee to neighbouring countries as refugees or who have been 'internally displaced' within their own countries. These children are in need of special attention. At a crucial and vulnerable time in their lives, these children are brutally uprooted and exposed to danger and insecurity. The particular vulnerability of internally displaced children is of concern. While refugees benefit from the specific attention of a number of international organisations, those who are displaced internally receive less protection even though they tend to be at greater risk. UNICEF recommends, therefore, that in each emergency a lead agency be appointed for the protection and assistance of the internally displaced. In collaboration with the lead agency, UNICEF should provide leadership for the protection and care of internally displaced children.

In the chaos of war many children are parted from their parents or other caregivers. There is need for initiating rapid and effective programmes of family

Afghanistan © Nils Carstensen / ACT International

tracing for these 'unaccompanied children' and for continuity in care. Nevertheless, UNICEF expresses cautions against placing unaccompanied children in institutions, arguing instead for care by relatives, friends or foster families.

Gender-based violence

Among the most severe problems which all children and women face during armed conflicts is a heightened risk of rape, sexual humiliation, prostitution and other forms of gender-based violence. Women of all ages are targets, but adolescent girls are often especially vulnerable since they may be thought less likely to have sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. While most victims have been girls, young boys are also raped or forced into prostitution – although such cases are generally underreported. These crimes might be seen simply as a consequence of general societal breakdown during wartime, but rape and other forms of gender-based violence are often used systematically as weapons of war. Yet such violence is rarely taken as seriously as it should be. To help prevent these abuses UNICEF recommends that all military and peacekeeping troops have special training on their responsibilities to women and children. But it also makes a case for rigorous punishment, saying that all cases of wartime rape and sexual torture should be prosecuted as war crimes.

The legacy of land-mines

Both during and after conflicts, children remain exposed to the dangers of land-mines. Globally there are some 110 million land-mines lying in wait for their victims. Added to these are millions of pieces of unexploded ordnance – bombs shells and grenades that failed to detonate on impact. Children are particularly exposed. Their natural curiosity leads them to investigate any strange object and, unable to read warning signs, they can easily stray

Liberia © Jonas Ekströmer / WCC

into minefields. While an adult may survive a detonation, even the smallest explosion can be lethal for a child. In Cambodia, around 20 per cent of all children injured by such devices die from their injuries. The human and economic devastation caused by land-mines has led to an international campaign for a complete ban on the production, use, trade and stockpiling of land-mines. UNICEF supports this campaign. It also emphasises the importance of mine clearance, as well as mine awareness programmes designed for children and the need to rehabilitate child victims of mine explosions. UNICEF proposes that such activities be largely financed by companies and countries which have profited from the sale of these deadly devices.

Child health under attack

Thousands of children die each year as a direct result of armed violence – from knives, bullets, bombs and land-mines. But millions more die from the indirect consequences of warfare – as a result of the disruption in food supplies, for example, and the destruction of health services, water systems and sanitation. In poor countries where children are already vulnerable to malnutrition and disease, the onset of armed conflict can increase death rates by up to 24 times – with those under five years at particular risk. But beyond the physical dangers, children may also suffer lasting psychosocial damage – as a result of the loss of their families, for example, or of exposure to violence. One UNICEF survey in Rwanda found that nearly 80 per cent of children had lost immediate family members, and more than one third of these had actually witnessed the murders. Children are also affected by other distressing experiences. Armed conflict splinters communities and breaks down trust among people – undermining the very foundation of children's lives. Different children will respond in different ways to such distressing experiences. Most will recover fairly quickly but a few may suffer permanent damage. All emergency assistance should specifically address the health needs of children. Emergency health teams should always include paediatric care and ensure access to reproductive health care for adolescents. When it comes to psychosocial care, UNICEF emphasises the importance of building on community resources – helping close family members as well as schoolteachers and other community workers to provide children with the long-term support they need.

The role of education

Education affords children a sense of security and continuity even when they are surrounded by chaos engendered by armed conflict. Therefore, schools should be kept open as long as feasible and that informal clas-ses should be established as soon as possible in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. Schooling should be flexible, with lessons held in the safest place at the safest time. Lessons can be held in caves or under trees, for example.

Sierra Leone © Robert Grossman / UNICEF/ HQ 95-0948

During a visit to a UNICEF-assisted camp for demobilised child soldiers near Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, Graça Machel speaks with a boy standing in one of the camp shelters. He is one of some 25 former child soldiers who had been forcibly conscripted by rebel forces.

Humanitarian assistance should include such flexible approaches to education. Keeping children in class is particularly important for adolescents who are at risk of being recruited into armed forces, prostitution or drug abuse. One of the best ways to protect older children is to involve them actively in community activities, including their own personal development programmes.•

A CALL TO ACTION

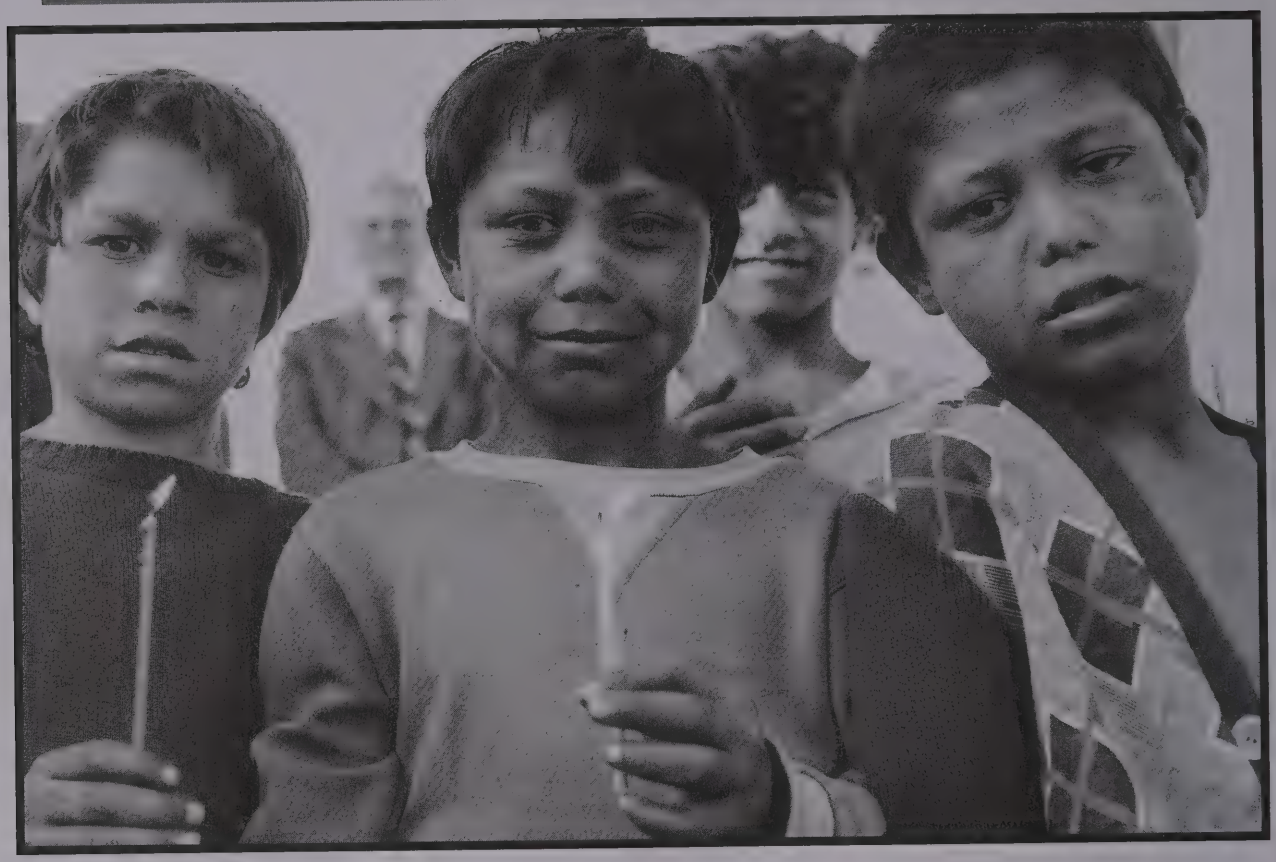
In the long term, Graça Machel's 1996 report asks that the international community must do all it can to prevent the outbreak of fighting, by addressing the socio-economic roots of conflict and banning arms shipments to conflict zones. It also insists that all actions to resolve conflicts and implement peace agreements – including such actions mandated by the UN Security Council and the General Assembly – should focus strongly on the needs of children and women. In the meantime, however, everything must be done to protect children caught up in armed struggles. The report says that everyone has a responsibility to report abuses of the rights of children and must take urgent measures to protect them. Again in her own words: "Above all else, this report is a call to action. It is unconscionable that we so clearly and consistently see children's rights attacked, and that we fail to defend them. It is unforgivable that children are assaulted, violated, murdered and yet our conscience is not revolted nor our sense of dignity challenged."

The report calls for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to assess the implementation of the report's recommendations and to keep children's concerns high on the international agenda. The report concludes: "Let us take this opportunity to recapture our instinct to nourish and protect children. Let us transform our moral outrage into concrete action ... Peace is every child's right."

Extracts from the Information document of the UNICEF on Graça Machel's report to the 1996 regular session of the UN General Assembly. Graça Machel is the UN Secretary General's Expert on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children and a former Minister of Education in Mozambique.

Christianity, children and sex

BY RON O'GRADY



Child sex abuse by church leaders challenges the church to reassess its theological beliefs in order to see whether there are some systems which need to be revised or developed. Three which are of particular importance in this area are the Christian understanding of the place of children in society, the way we use confession and forgiveness in the church, and the broad question of sexual relations versus no sexual relations (celibacy).

A THEOLOGY OF THE CHILD

Christian beliefs were founded and formed in a tribal era. By the time of Jesus, some tribes had moved from being nomadic to a more settled life-style. Small towns and villages were built around trade routes, religious centres or areas of arable land, but most communities remained tribal based. From time to time tribes would combine to defend their own self-interest from invaders but there was little sense of nationhood as it is understood today.

In this context, children played a critical role. They were the tribe's best hope for future defence and they provided social security for members of the family as they grew older. Not surprisingly, the bearing and rearing of children was an essential part of a tribe's life-style and dominated the thoughts and attention of the people.

Was Sarah barren? This was a shame and a disgrace. Let her husband take a slave woman to bear children. Did David's son die in an accident? Then let the whole tribe go into mourning. At the most basic level of survival, the child was the centre of importance for the whole community. Without many children the tribe had no future.

The Old Testament records show that being childless was thought to be a great tragedy and a punishment from God. The strongest curse Isaiah could invoke upon Babylon was that its women would become barren. A family without children was a disaster for the tribe.

> In biblical times it was customary to assume that children were "owned" by the parents.

Conversely, it was seen as the blessing of God when a family had many children, especially if they were sons. In the days before women went to war, the sons would be the first line of defence against a marauding tribe.

Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.
Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.
He shall not be put to shame
When he speaks with the enemies in the gate.
(Ps. 127:3-5)

But there was a qualification. It was not enough to bear children, they must also conform to tribal norms and values. The mother looked after the domestic side of the family while the father took responsibility for training his sons in the ways of warfare and teaching them the religious basis from which the tribe developed its cohesion and strength.

Training the child meant discipline.

"Hear, my child, your father's instructions,
and do not reject your mother's teaching."
(Prov. 1: 8)

"A wise child loves discipline."
(Prov. 13:1)

The child was never seen as an isolated individual but as a part of the community. A major function in life for every member of the tribe was to conform to the common values and thus ensure the survival of the clan. Punishment was meted out as a means to ensure conformity and dependence, though there are several examples in history of it causing some children to rebel and leave their tribe.

In biblical times before property or legal rights were established, most ownership was built on traditional assump-tions rather than on law. It was customary to assume that children were "owned" by the parents. Children could be given away or sold by the father; children were a property, a chattel of the family, until they had passed through the rites of passage which made them full members of the tribe. Even then, strict tribal hierarchy made them subservient to tribal elders. The attitude of the church towards children during the first period of the Christian era continued to be based on tribal survival and led to four basic beliefs:

- a family without children is bad;
- having many children (especially sons) is good;
- children should be disciplined through punishment;
- children are the property of their parents.

The position of children today

Society has changed dramatically in the last century and with these changes many of the assumptions on which tribal community was built have lost their significance. In a welfare state, a large family with many children is no longer needed as a form of social security. And with the growing sophistication of surveillance, law enforcement, conflict and warfare, the security of a household or community is not dependent on large families for its defence and protection.

Many other factors such as improved health care, increased longevity, working parents and modern city life-styles have contributed to a sharp decline in the size of families in almost all economically developed countries. Children are no longer a requirement for living a full and happy life, and increasing numbers of young people are aware that they can survive quite well in life without being parents.

The other tribal imperatives of stern discipline towards, and ownership of, children are also fast disappearing. Faced with a wide range of choices, the modern young person who is subjected to old-fashioned discipline is likely to walk away from the family and set up an independent life, or even lodge a cruelty case with the authorities. Such independence, obviously, was not possible for most young people in biblical times.

There are exceptions in the modern era, even in developed countries. Cult religious groups, which regard themselves as being constantly persecuted by the wider community, or groups of foreign migrants

USA © Jean-Claude Lejeune / WCC

trying to retain their identity as a minority community in a much larger population, still continue to follow Old Testament patterns as a form of preservation. They are more inclined to have large families and to see discipline and the use of severe punishment as key factors in ensuring the survival of their community.

If the traditional biblical understanding of children is no longer relevant for the majority of people, where do we look for guidance and inspiration?

It has become customary in the church today to speak of the need for a return to "family values", but it is not clear what the church means by this. If it means mum and dad and a large number of children held together by a strict discipline standing around the piano singing hymns, then it will almost certainly fail – and deservedly so. The world has moved into new and more creative forms of elective tribalism, and survival is no longer dependent on having large families of disciplined warriors. In the new global society, the old norms of family life can no longer determine our life-style.

The life-style of the Western world in particular is creating a new understanding of the role of children and the church is threatened with the likelihood of being left irrelevant on the margins of society unless it can understand these changes and contribute to them in a more positive manner.

The new direction for children in society was articulated in some detail in September 1990 when the nations of the world signed, and subsequently ratified, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The convention received wider and faster endorsement by nations than any previous UN document and is now universally accepted. What is more, the convention includes a reporting mechanism which ensures that the values and ideals included in the document will eventually be the basis on which all countries of the world formulate their laws and treat their children.

The understanding of children inherent in the convention represents a quantum leap from the traditional Jewish and Christian values that we have been teaching for years and which were the basis on which we built Western society. But the convention itself has hardly been noted by the church and is little known outside a small circle of child advocates. Even to speak of children possessing rights is a foreign language for many Christians. The ideal child for many is still "the one who is seen and not heard", and most Christian parents will make their own unilateral decisions on what is right for their children. Some continue to quote the Old Testament:

> *Those who spare the rod, hate their children but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.*
> (Prov. 13:24)

This may be a comforting thought for some parents but a modern life-style makes such a viewpoint extremely difficult to realise. Many children spend more quality time in school with teachers and friends than they do at home, one or possibly both of the parents will be away from home for long hours; and the church, once the arbiter of behaviour, has little attraction for most young people. When you put these three factors together, the possibility of the family exerting the control over children that was exercised by earlier generations is quite remote. Today, much of the training to which children respond comes from their television sets and computers or from their peers and celebrity

role models rather than from their parents. The changed social context in which we live is already leaving many church leaders behind when it comes to the place and role of children. This is shown quite clearly in the responses made by some clergy in relation to allegations of child sex abuse. They attempt to minimise the significance of their action with throw-away lines. "It happens to all kids", or "it's just part of growing up, they'll get over it". Such comments can be read as simply justification for irresponsible adult behaviour and fail to recognise that the child has rights that must be observed.

The traditions of the past left adults free to make whatever judgements they chose in relation to their children and the only option for the child was obedience. But the days when adults were automatically right and a child was *just* a child have gone for ever. Children of today will increasingly be seen, heard and (usually) believed.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child turns the old concepts upside down. It asserts that there are independent and inalienable rights which the child possesses simply by being a child, and that these have priority over alternative rights which some parents or members of society might consider more appropriate. There are still many glitches in the implementation of this convention but the principle of children's rights, like the Declaration on Human Rights, is here to stay. It requires a thorough reassessment of our theological understanding of children and their place in society.

> The understanding of children inherent in the convention represents a quantum leap from the traditional Jewish and Christian values

For example: Does this mean that the child has the right to participate in decisions that affect him or her? Note that we are asking whether the child has *the right*, and not has the child *the possibility*. This right is one of many enshrined in the convention but, apart from a few tentative experiments with this radical concept by some governments and youth programmes, it has largely been ignored and is, consequently, ineffective.

As presently structured the church will find it an even more difficult, if not impossible, step to give children the right to participate in decision-making processes which affect them. Almost all churches operate on a hierarchical system in which seniority gives added authority. The idea that children and young people have decision-making rights is the antithesis of traditional church views where rules are handed down from above. The design of most church build-ings reflects this hierarchical view with the congregation seated in formal rows facing the clerical spokesperson for God. The people stand when told to, close their eyes when praying, and sit obediently and without question when they are told what the teaching of the church is. To reinforce this authority, the minister will often be standing in a defensive pulpit or on an elevated platform, six feet above argument. In the church, seniority, age and rank still have priority over youth.

Children of today do not understand this world. They are growing up in an atmosphere where it is appropriate to ask questions and where they are encouraged to seek answers for themselves. If the UN convention is universally implemented children will soon be demanding their own rights. New technologies have provided them with access to information and knowledge more extensive than their parents could ever know. Most parents are strangers in this new world and have little experience in knowing how to act appropriately. In the area of pornography, for example, many parents have become anxious and paranoid about the way their children use computers, but they are dependent on what others are telling them since they have little understanding of how the internet works. But they do understand that their authority is slowly being eroded by their own children, whose expertise in technology has already begun to challenge the parents' status in the family.

Whatever changes occur in the next decades, the concept of children's rights will have a central place in the new world and it will force us into fresh recognition of the importance of children. Viewing children in this new way has the potential to provide mechanisms that will protect children from those who would exploit them. This in turn will place knowledge and information at our fingertips and offer new ways of creating an international society in which all people can develop to their full potential in security and love. The church should welcome such a development. But first it has to understand it. •

Excerpted from The Hidden Shame of the Church: Sexual Abuse of Children and the Church., *Risk Book Series no. 94, Geneva, WCC, 2001.*

Ron O'Grady is currently the honorary president of ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism), the organisation which deals with issues of child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking in children.

Children in the Church

BY JUDY JARVIS

Democratic Republic of Congo © John Taylor / WCC

A few months ago I found myself leading worship for all ages in Brixton, in south London. About half an hour into the service (during which I thought there had been a good deal of participation) a small child walked up to the lectern where I was standing and handed me a note. It said, "The children would like to do something now". Startled out of the usual Methodist pattern of preacher dominance, I immediately agreed. A handsome boy of about twelve came to the front and read the following poem, the source of which I have not been able to discover:

I dream of a church
where love and people
are more important
than stone and steeple.

I dream of a church
with an open door
where no one is privileged
except the poor.

I dream of a church
where milk and honey
will flow more freely
than power and money.
I dream of a church
where young and old
will be inspired
to change their world.

I dream of a church
that will make my dreams come true.

The twentieth century can be seen as a period of decline for children in the church in Britain. At the beginning of the century sending your child to Sunday School was a national way of life (though the drop in attendance began then and continued at about 5% per year for the rest of the century). By the 1950's, though much reduced, the Sunday Schools were still a force to be reckoned with, complete with star cards, prizes for attendance and Sunday School anniversaries. They were still a great comfort to the church members – out of sight (often out of mind) but, patently, the church of tomorrow.

But change was in the air, in society and in the church. Increasingly questions were being asked about the ability of children to be people of faith and their capacity for worship. This led to a re-thinking of the aims of Christian education, and a questioning of the appropriateness of the almost total separation of the Sunday School from the worshipping community. This, in turn, led to the beginning of a more experiential approach within the Sunday School (as in the day schools) and also to the development of "Family worship". Children were no longer "the church of tomorrow" but were beginning to be seen as "the church of today".

By the 1990's an ecumenical group, appointed by the churches to prepare training material for those working with children could agree that:

Children and adults are loved unconditionally by God. They are affirmed in the life and ministry of Jesus. God's love is made real through human life and relationships. The implications for the Christian community are:

- Children and adults are of equal value.
- All need to experience what it means to belong.
- All need to contribute and all need to receive.
- Children need recognition as people of faith.
- Worship and celebration are key elements in the growth of faith.
- All need to be changed by the love of Christ and to share the good news in the wider community.
- Christian nurture and growth are for all and are the responsibility of all.
- All Christian communities belong to the universal Church and need to share, support and learn from each other in serving the world.

(From *Kaleidoscope*, by members of The *Consultative Group on Ministry among Children*, National Christian Education Council 1993).

So, from certain points of view, the twentieth century can be seen as a time when children, at last, began to take their rightful place in the life of the church, or at least in some churches. They were in greatly reduced numbers (as were the adults), but for the children who were in the church much was changed. They were no longer sent to church – families came together. In many churches they no longer watched or were kept out while their parents took Communion – they shared the sacrament together. No longer was it appropriate to treat services when all ages were together as entertainment, for all worshipped together – all had the capacity to experience the numinous. Even, in some churches, there were the first steps towards more than token listening to children – children were being allowed to influence the thinking and action of the whole church community, to have a vote in their own right.

At the beginning of this century we see few children in our churches on Sundays (with some notable exceptions, particularly among the Black community), and most of these are "nurture groups", the children of church members. What lies in the future for children in the church? Where do we go from here?

It is quite easy to sketch out a "worst-case" scenario. At the present rate of decline the church as we know it in Britain could cease to exist – for both adults and children. The report *All God's Children* (from the Anglican *General Synod Board of Education and Board of Mission* 1991) showed that one of the influences of the Sunday School was that it familiarised children to a certain extent with the church. Though few transferred from the Sunday School into the church, some, at a later stage in life, found it easier to come back into the life of the church because they felt some sense of belonging. A recent survey taken among young people revealed that 75% had never been inside a church. What chance is there of these young people feeling confident and welcome enough to take the risk of entering the average church on a Sunday morning? What is the likelihood of them wanting to be married in church? What is the chance of them bringing their children for Baptism, traditionally one of the moments of opportunity for the church? Are we about to witness the death of the Church as we know it?

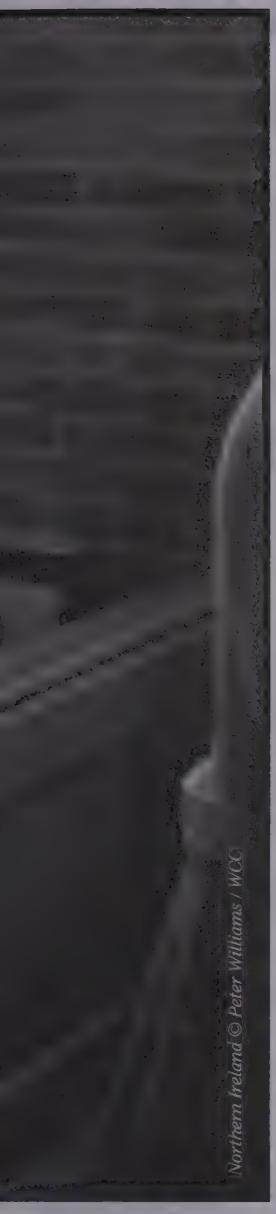
All of us who are Christians are aware of our responsibility – and our passion – to "keep alive the rumour of God". How are we going to approach this, for ourselves, and, more particularly, for our children? Let us return to the poem read by the boy from Brixton:

I dream of a church
where love and people
are more important
than stone and steeple.

Children are very aware of the nature of the world in which we live. We should not forget that the events of September 11th are part of the immediate experience of our children. They, more than any children who have come before them, are aware of the presence in our society of people of other faiths. In many parts of Britain they meet them everyday. It is vital that our children see the worshipping community not as a bigoted, unthinking group of people, out of touch with the society in which we live, but as a caring, loving community, wanting to understand the needs a viewpoints of others and to work with them, not against them.

I dream of a Church
with an open door
where no one is privileged
except the poor.

At the beginning of the 1980's a nine-year-old child wrote. "When we gave our 1% appeal money so that people in poor countries could grow food I thought it was like sharing communion. When bread and wine are shared I think of sharing in the world." The world view that came naturally to this nine-year-old is much more elusive in the life of the church. In a lecture to the Methodist Conference, Professor John Hull, professor in Christian Education in the University of Birmingham, argued for the importance of the church


Northern Ireland © Peter Williams / WCC

becoming a more action (love)-orientated movement. He quoted the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate…" He remarked that the whole of the life and ministry of Jesus disappears down a comma in the Apostles' Creed! Children, as they enter into the life of the church, and as they take part in the liturgy, ask deeply disturbing questions about the life and practice of the church. Too often what they see is an inward-looking, self-centred community, concerned with its own salvation, rather than a community that acts out daily the example set by Jesus.

I dream of a Church
where milk and honey
will flow more freely
than power or money.

The church remains a place where the power is held in a few hands and where money is a constant pre-occupation. Again, the question must be asked, what impression does this give to our children? Is this a "club" to which it would be good to belong?

I dream of a Church
where young and old
will be inspired
to change the world.

The six-year-old son of a friend of mine was waiting for the service to begin. An elderly lady, sitting in front of him, turned round and asked, "Are you going to be good?" – "Are you?" he replied. At this the elderly lady smiled, "You're quite right," she said, "I find it boring sometimes too!" How does the church meet this challenge – to inspire both young and old and to enable them to see that it is possible for them to make a difference?

Another important area needs to be mentioned, that is the problem of belief. It has become clear that, though Christian nurture is important, it must be matched by a strong emphasis on helping children to think critically about faith. They, and the adults around them, need to do this to cope with the pressures of everyday life and the scepticism they encounter towards their faith. Many studies have shown that children are innately spiritual, but they can also see that many people live apparently happy and fulfilled lives without any evident belief in God. Why, then should they bother? This poses a particular problem for the church. Where are the adults who have thought critically about their faith and who are able to help our children? Too often they themselves have left a church which has proved unable to meet the challenge of their probing questions.

This article could have focussed on some of the practical ways of approaching the future: more holiday clubs, more out-of-school activities, Wednesday Sunday School, closer relationships with schools; but unless the deeper issues are addressed it feels like "fiddling while Rome burns". It is not acceptable, however, to pose all the problems without offering some hope for the future. John Sutcliffe suggests such a way forward in the recently published *Tuesday's Child, A Reader for Christian Education*:

…a renewed understanding of oikoumene could be a beginning point….. It holds in a united whole the physical world and all its people; it gives individuals and communities – local and world-wide – identity; it points to living with an acceptance of diversity and plurality; it demands seeking the end of exploitation and violence; it suggests meaning and a mega-story in which everyone is respected and has a part to play; it is a concept of vision and hope and love which supersedes all lesser loyalties.

I dream of a Church
that will make my dreams come true.

Judy Jarvis is Children's Secretary in the Connexional Team of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. Previously a teacher and headteacher, she is a former moderator of the Consultative Group on Ministry among Children, a network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and has chaired the European Conference in Christian Education. She travels widely, in Britain and Europe. She has a particular interest in all age worship and in story-telling. She has contributed to a number of publications as writer and editor. She is, at present, working with two major ecumenical groups; one to produce Roots – new materials for worship and learning in the church; the second, to set up the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding.

Child Trafficking in Albania
a Save the Children's report

BY DANIEL RENTON

Save the Children has published "Child Trafficking in Albania". The report concludes that thousands of women and children have been abducted and forced to work as prostitutes abroad. It was also found that this practice still occurs on a daily basis. It maintains that at least 60% of Albanians trafficked for prostitution are children. More than half are tricked into prostitution, while more than a third are abducted. Up to 90% of girls over the age of 14 no longer attend school in some rural areas due to fear of being trafficked.

This report has been instrumental in bringing the situation to light in Albania and beyond. It is expected to translate into changes in government policies and public attitudes which will have an impact on curbing this traffic in human lives.

Albania © Peter Williams / WCC

Albania has been a major source country for the trafficking of women and children[1] (under 18-year olds) since the collapse of communism in 1991. It is estimated that there are 30,000 Albanian prostitutes abroad. Despite this, until 1997, Albanian authorities were reluctant to admit that many were the victims of trafficking. Today, trafficking is high on the political agenda, but still very little research has been done into the trafficking of Albanian women and children abroad. Apart from the efforts of some national non-government organisations, the fate of trafficked women and girls has, by and large, been ignored.

Because of the absence of any meaningful or reliable statistics on trafficking (either in Albania or host countries), the study relied on anecdotal evidence at grassroots level to better determine numbers, recruitment areas, trends and practices. Through discussion groups, questionnaires and over a 100 interviews, a research team consulted victims, teachers, missionaries, villagers, speedboat owners, students, state officials, non-governmental organisations and international organisations. The intention was to hear first-hand from those who have witnessed trafficking in the worst affected areas of Albania.

The study concluded that trafficking has been, and still is, widespread in the country and the majority of victims are children. Trafficking is usually conducted through offers of false marriages and jobs, or abduction and selling. In some parts of Albania, there is hardly a village that remains untouched. While the trend has shown a slight decline since 1997/98, trafficking of children for prostitution continues on an almost daily basis and the risks of recruitment remain high, especially for the poor and ill educated.

For example, in Puke district in the north, village teachers have identified 87 females trafficked in the last three years, 80% of them children. Local sources claim 2000 women from the Berat district are working as prostitutes abroad, 80% of them were children when they were trafficked. In a handful of villages in the Zadrima area, it is estimated that 30 women have been forced into prostitution. There are countless other examples and a significant number of those have occurred in the last 6 months.

Albania © Peter Williams / WCC

In Italy and Greece, Albanian girls are subjected to extreme levels of danger, violence and sexual exploitation.

However, the picture is a complicated one. There is a steady rise in emigration for voluntary prostitution abroad to escape poverty and bleak futures in Albania. It is difficult to determine who leaves willingly and who is forced to leave for prostitution. But according to Italian NGOs, many of the voluntary prostitutes are unprepared for the harsh reality awaiting them and often end up being trafficked, exploited, and victimised when abroad. The area of forced trafficking and willing emigration for illicit activity is further blurred when discussing children. Children may say they go willingly, but are often coerced, or convinced by adults, to engage in illegal activity without understanding the nature of the work.

In Italy and Greece where there are estimated to be 15,000 and 6,000 Albanian prostitutes respectively, Albanian girls are subjected to extreme levels of danger, violence and sexual exploitation. Many, perhaps the majority, are unpaid, rendering them sex-slaves. Their passports are taken and threats and intimidation to themselves and their families prevent them from escaping and testifying against their pimps. The Albanian pimp has a reputation for extreme ruthlessness and murder is not uncommon. Last year, the Italian Ministry of Interior reported that 168 foreign prostitutes had been killed, the majority Albanians or Nigerians murdered by their pimps.

Those who do return to Albania (many are deported from Italy daily) are given very little help. There is not a single official shelter or welfare programme available to them and the state provides no security or protection. Some religious orders offer temporary accommodation but these services are on an ad hoc, case-by-case basis. If they attempt to return to their communities they usually face ostracisation and family rejection. Albania still has a culture that blames girls that have been sexually abused rather than seeing them as victims. In practise many fear to come back and those that do are usually re-trafficked.

The trafficking of children to Greece for begging and forced labour is no less alarming. It is estimated that there are 1000 mainly Albanian gypsy children in the city of Thessaloniki alone. They, too, tell stories of systematic violence and exploitation at the hands of their traffickers. Yet the Albanian Ministry of Public Order claims to have no evidence of the trade and the general public appear to be largely indifferent.

An alarming consequence of the fear of trafficking in Albania is a dramatic decrease in the number of girls over the age of 14 attending high school. In remote areas, where pupils may have to walk for over an hour to get to school, the research has discovered that as many as 90% of girls no longer receive a high school education. Although there are other factors that

Trafficking of women and children, illegal immigrants, drugs and weapons is a multi-million dollar industry, which directly and indirectly employs many people in Albania.

contribute to the trend, the majority of parents say their daughters would attend school, if their security on route could be guaranteed.

Awareness of trafficking is high in many areas as a result of media attention and the warnings of those who have returned. But there is still an urgent need to inform those in the remote areas because the conditions that make girls and women susceptible to the approaches of traffickers – poverty, unemployment, lack of education and reduced marriage prospects due to the mass emigration of boys – are as acute as ever.

Trafficking of women and children, illegal immigrants, drugs and weapons is a multimillion dollar industry, which directly and indirectly employs many people in Albania. But despite the fact that trafficking is now high on the political agenda, there are still very few prosecutions. Albania is now a major transit country for the trafficking of thousands of foreign women every year from countries such as Moldova, Romania and Ukraine and the crime networks continue to operate with virtual impunity.

While traffickers (many of whom are well known) continue to live within the community and their activities are tolerated, there is a continuing threat to Albanian girls. As an ex-INTERPOL source says, "As long as the economic conditions prevail and the financial rewards are so high, Albania will remain a source country."

The report concludes that it is incumbent on the government of Albania to address the issue of trafficking more seriously. It also needs to enforce the law, prosecute criminals, provide services and welfare programmes for victims, ensure the security and protection of victims and organisations trying to help them and tackle the indifference of the Albanian public. In the meantime, international organisations and NGOs can do a great deal to prevent further trafficking of children and help those already trafficked.

Main conclusions

- Albania continues to be a significant source country of trafficking. This situation will remain as such until the law is enforced and the prevailing conditions of poverty and lack of opportunity ameliorate.
- The most "at risk" groups are children (under 18) from poor and ill-educated families.
- There needs to be programmes and services to help victims, but these must be developed in conjunction with local NGOs and with the support of the government and community. This is not possible until the government provides protection and security. •

Notes

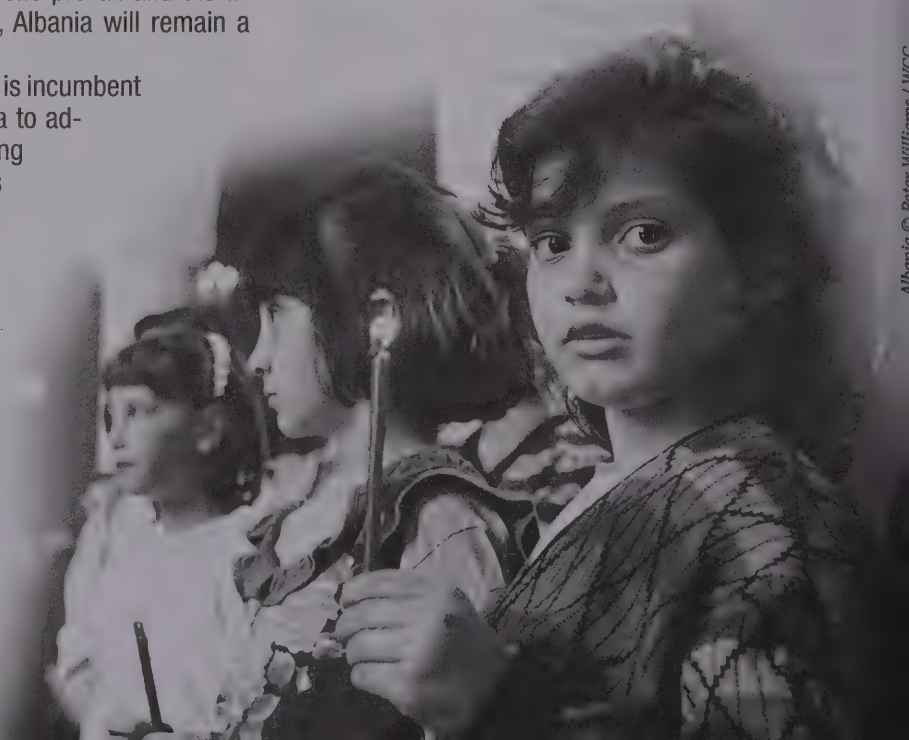
1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as under 18 years old.

The complete report can be found at:
http://www.savethechildren.org/trafficking/

Contact addresses:

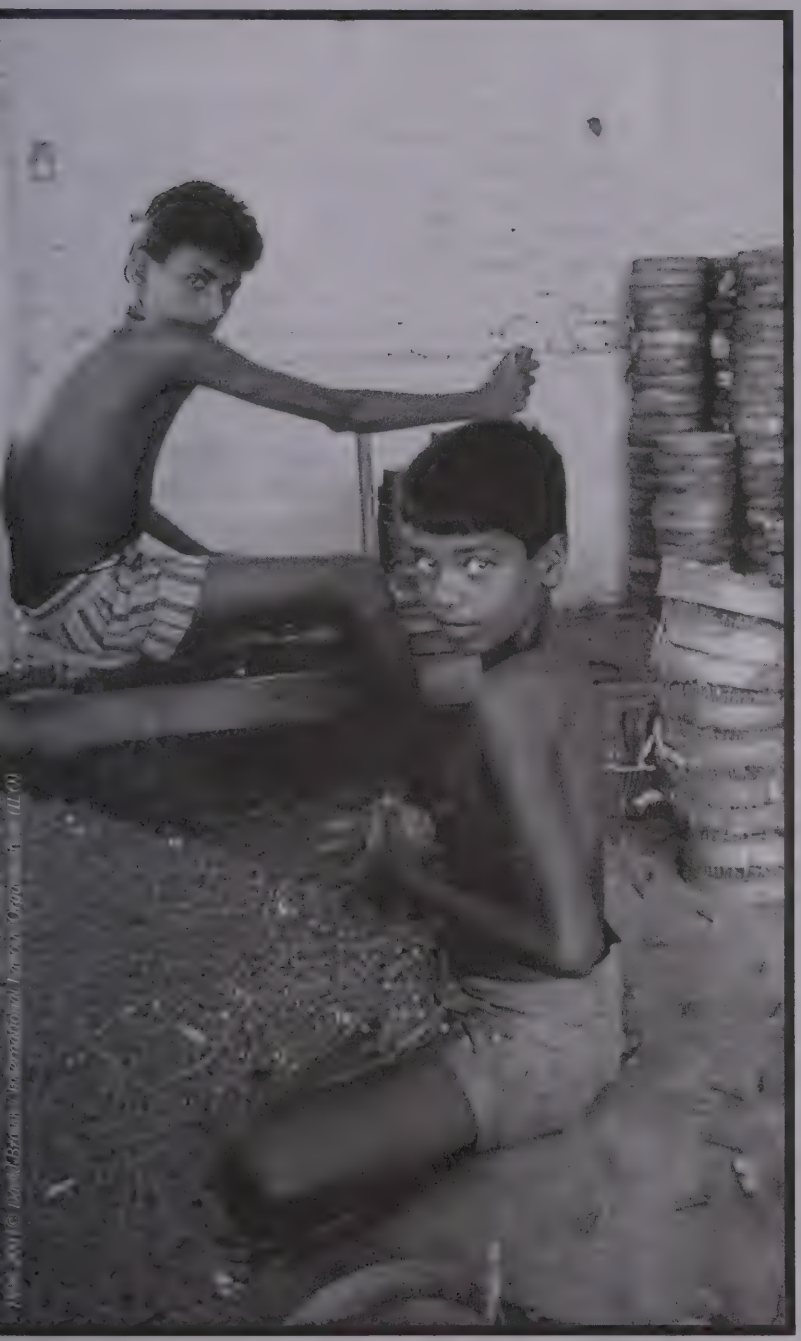
Save the Children US
Att: Donor Services
54 Wilton Road
Westport, CT 06880
USA
Tel: +1-800-728-3843
twebster@savechildren.org,

International Save the Children Alliance (Secretariat Office)
275-281 King St
London - W6 9LZ
Tel: 00 44 208 237 8010
diana@save-children-alliance.org
www.savethechildren.net



Albania © Peter Williams / WCC

Voices of children



Children making industrial tubes in the firecracker industry in India

Who made your dress?

A new garment factory opened up recently in Tomas' neighbourhood. The factory used to be in another country, but the owner decided that the wages were too high there. He moved the factory to Tomas' country where he could pay workers less and make more profits.

Tomas is 13 years old. Along with 10 other children his age, Tomas makes bridal gowns and fancy dresses. On the other side of the world, brides-to-be shop for the gowns that Tomas and other children produce, and students buy the fancy dresses for graduation parties, probably not realising that they are made by children who never had a chance to go to school, let alone celebrate graduation. Tomas and the other children in his factory are protected by government legislation – for example, they're supposed to get time off to go to school, and they're supposed to work a maximum of 35 hours each week. But in reality, they can't keep their jobs unless they put in about a 60-hour work week. They are not paid any overtime and, in some cases, they are not even paid the basic minimum wage. No medical care is provided, either. According to Tomas, "We are treated the same as the adults in what is demanded of us and we are treated worse in what we receive."

Based upon materials provided by UNITE! Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, AFL-CIO, CLC, New York, USA. Found on UNICEF web site: http://www.unicef.org

Philippines © J. Maillard / ILO

A US farm worker tells her story

My name is Belinda and I am 14 years old and currently attending Queen Anne' High School. I am an American farm worker. For the past thirteen years I have been migrating from Mission, Texas to the eastern shore of Maryland. The worst part about migrating is having to adjust everywhere I go even if I don't like it. Since my first year in school I have had to change schools twice a year. For me there is no such thing as a summer vacation. Once school is out we pack our things and head to Maryland to find work. We have to work every single day because we need the money for food and bills.

Three years ago, at the age of 11, I started working in the fields picking squash and bell peppers at different farms. I work alongside my parents under the sun, huffing and puffing and aching everywhere. Sometimes there is no clean water available to help quench our thirst and most of the time there is no water available for washing our hands and faces before eating or after going to the bathroom.

It is very dangerous to work in the fields because of all the pesticides that are used to control insects. On the very first day of work this season I developed a rash all over my legs. The rash made my legs very red and itchy. But even so I went to work the next day.

Through farm work I have learned to be responsible and how to manage money. Picking squash gets easier day by day but the pay is low. I get 42 cents a bucket but have to pick at least 60 buckets to make it worthwhile. A full bucket weighs about 25 pounds.

No child belongs in the field and all children deserve an opportunity to enjoy their childhood. By the way, I don't eat squash because it is yucky and it reminds me of working in the fields.

Excerpted from a speech given at the National Child Labour Coalition Conference, Washington, DC, in September 1996. Found on UNICEF web site: http://www.unicef.org

Child prostitution

A letter from a Thai child prostitute expresses the pain of millions of girl children being inducted into the sex trade every day (provided by the Foundation for Women, Thailand):

Dear Daddy and Mom,

I write to you because I miss you… I am not working as a servant, but as a prostitute. Each day I must serve 7-8 men. I can get diseases like VD, TB, AIDS, etc. They threaten to beat me up if I don't do it. They beat up girls who refused them, until they died. They won't take us to be treated because they are afraid that we will run away. Instead they give us two or three tablets… Being a prostitute is like being a bird in a cage. They can't fly away.

WALK IN MY SHOES

by Jan Rothenburger (in "*Ear to the Streets*" Toronto: On the Path Publications, 1999)

I see you stare with your contempted faces
As I stand on the corner to work,
How would you like to trade me places,
And feel all of my hurt.

I'm desperate for cash cause I need a fix,
It helps ease the pain I've always known;
It's not something I do just for kicks,
To survive I need to be stoned.

Not that I want to pass on the blame,
But society cast me aside.
And believe me, I live with the shame,
Many nights all alone I have cried.

So don't try to judge what you can't understand,
I need love more than a sneer.
If someone would have just given me a hand,
I wouldn't be standing out here.

So if you choose
Walk in my shoes
Pretend that you are me
Go down the street
Of real defeat
And see how you would be.

They've been all about
The sole's worn out
Just trying to be free
Walk in my shoes
And feel me lose
All my dignity.

***Ear to the Streets**, a compilation of poetry by street youth from across Canada, may be purchased from Daniel Broderick at 001-416-760 6651.*

Children, Alcohol and Drugs

BY ANDERS K. HÄGGLUND

At two o'clock in the morning, the night patrol from the church stopped in the fashionable area of Stockholm. At a street corner, they recognised a well-known pimp talking to a young girl. She was both drunk at too young to be there. The pimp tried to get her into his car. The street pastor went up to them and presented himself and his team. The girl started to sob and asked them to take her home: "I'm drunk and afraid". The pimp became angry but left the scene. As the church night patrol drove her home, the 16-year-old girl started to tell her story. Her parents had not allowed her to go to the downtown disco that night. But she went with her boy friend. At midnight, she had a fight with her boyfriend, left the disco both upset and drunk and started to walk the streets back home. Suddenly she was accosted by a strange man and it was then that the street pastor arrived. She realised how dangerous this situation could have been. When the church night patrol arrived and asked if they could come in and talk to her parents, she said: "Please don't, my father is the local priest".

According to the research and reports I have read, children up to the age of at least 18 should not consume alcohol or other drugs. Unfortunately, this is very often not the case. In February 2001, a World Health Organisation (WHO) reports on alcohol consumption on global level:

> *"Alcohol consumption is slowly declining in most of the developed countries, and rising in many of the developing countries, especially of eastern and central Europe. Youth drinking is increasing in both developed and developing countries.*
> *Alcohol's contribution to the global burden of disease is significant and growing in some regions, to the point that in parts of central and eastern Europe, alcohol use is contributing to an unprecedented decline in male life expectancy.*
> *The existing evidence is sufficient to indicate that alcohol is a significant threat to world health."*

Alcohol and drugs together constitute one of the world's greatest economic market, whether legal or illegal. It is a kind of modern version of the trade triangle that, 300 years ago, exchanged slaves, sugar, cotton and tobacco in a triangle between Africa, America and Europe.

Some years ago at the San Diego ICAA Conference I asked an alcohol producer what the industry's goal was?" His answer was "To earn as much money as possible". Public health issues, he said, were not the industry's responsibility. It just observed the laws of the country where their products were sold. Adequate legislation on alcohol is lacking in many countries. And very often women and children become the innocent victims of male grown-up dependency, and hunger for economic profit. The effect of the alcoholic soft drinks – "alco-pops" – sold and marketed in the United Kingdom, especially on teenagers, is a typical example.

Who cares for young addicts who will maybe never become taxpayers in society? Who cares for the child soldiers in southern Africa who are fed on drugs? Some economic theories claim that marginalised people are themselves to blame for their poverty or addiction and that it is a waste of taxes to use it to help addicts. I believe this is an entirely misguided view. It is time for the people who call themselves leaders to work towards a more equal society where everyone has access to health, education and a descent standard of living. But the reality is, as a minister of social affairs from a European country said at the WHO/EU ministerial conference on Young People and Alcohol in Stockholm in February 2001; "*I feel more or less powerless in my country to improve public health issues because the minister of finance and the market forces have [all] the power.*"

It is time for churches to talk about structural sin, which causes more pain among children in our world than any personal sin has ever done. The alcohol and

drugs trade is a major component in worldwide suffering today. Many juvenile delinquents and young addicts are not only blamed for the ills of the global village but also mistreated and neglected. Very often, it is the survival instinct and the effects of their substance abuse that push addicted people to violate their own morals and values. Addiction often develops among young people because they lack jobs, money, economic security, emotional and social support. Mainstream society insists that young addicts choose to become addicted, but do they really? In my view, children and young people's alcohol and drug abuse today is the responsibility of adults who love money and profit more than real justice. Children do as adults do, not as they say! The "golden rule" today is that the person who owns the gold sets the rules. The golden rule Jesus talked about seems to be forgotten:

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:..." (KJV) Matthew 7:12

Jesus also said:

"But who so shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences... (KJV) Matt. 18:6-7.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father... for the Son of man is come to save that which was lost". (KJV) Matthew 18:10-11

I wonder how Jesus would react to this protest from a Zambian:

"We have no water, no light, no schools, no washing facilities but the municipality says that they will build a beer hall for us. If we drink beer, the municipality can earn money so that one-day we will have clean water in a pipe. How much beer do I have to drink before my children have water to drink?"

The world is forgetting an axiom found in most religions: to be rich is not to have a lot of money or material things. To be rich is to have a family, trustworthy friends, a relationship to God, to other people, to the environment and myself.

But maybe society cannot be changed from the top down. Maybe it is from the middle, bottom and marginalised sectors of society that the world will be changed. That was certainly so during the first three centuries of the Christian Church. Jesus choose His disciples from the middle and marginalised sectors of His society. Jesus trusted twelve dubious boys. He acted as a mentor for them, master and disciple side by side. With the power of Jesus' resurrection and of the Holy Spirit of the Trinity, they turned the Roman Empire upside down.

When we talk about children, alcohol and drugs, we often depend on out-dated information and myths. The real experts in this field are our own children who know the present trends. Invite young people from the streets of your societies to tell their stories and let them speak without interrupting them. Remember that God trusted a teenage girl named Maria to carry the Word that created cosmos. Very often the best solutions come from people hurt by unjust systems. many marginalised youth have good ideas on how to solve the problems, but very few people listen to them. Instead, frustration and bitterness are growing, with riots, suicide attempts or addiction as some of the consequences.

Who would Jesus and His disciples relate to if he came to your hometown today?

Would they relate to:

- a fourteen-year-old Asian prostitute and drug-addict?
- a crack-dependent boy in the middle of the night somewhere in America?
- a HIV-positive girl, raped by a drunken man somewhere in Southern Africa?
- a young addict in Northern Canada trying to jump into the cold sea?
- twenty-two homeless, glue-sniffing street children in Eastern Europe?
- a child physically abused by a hashish-dependent father in the Middle East?
- abandoned and lonely mothers with scared children in Scandinavia?
- young mothers in South India setting fire to the local liquor industry?
- small-time drug dealers in Europe?
- the children who cry "Lord, have mercy on us!".

Most churches believe that Christ comes to us in the Eucharist. But He has also promised to meet us when we relate to the least of our brethren (Matt. 25:40). This is also the experience of some of the saints, like St Bishoy, St Martin and St Christopher. Father Ion Bria writes in his book *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*:

> "Eucharistic communion means nothing without human and social sharing, without identification with those people who, through most of their existence, go poor, hungry and naked."

Anders K. Hägglund is coordinator of deacons, Sundbyberg, Church of Sweden.

Definitions

Children: The United Nations (UN) Convention on Human Rights of the Child, article one, states: A child is every human being under 18 years of age if national law does not say otherwise.

According to the Bible, all human beings are God's children. Jesus Christ sets a child as an example of the relation between God and humans.

Alcohol: A poisonous non-coloured liquid, C_2H_5OH. Alcohol when used causes a temporary intoxication in the central nervous system. For a young person, with a not fully-developed liver, it causes higher levels of intoxication than for a fully grown person. Women are more vulnerable than men because they have less water in the body system. Regular use of alcohol can cause an addiction called alcoholism. Both regular and sporadic use of alcohol intoxication may have negative consequences, both for the individual and for society.

When the Bible talks about wine, it is wine that had a maximum of 13% of alcohol. From historical sources, we also know that water was often added to wine. It was not until the Middle Ages that alchemists and monks learned how to distil wine and make alcohol beverages stronger than 13%. At 13%, the alcohol kills the yeast bacteria in the fermentation process. When the Bible talks about "strong wine" (Judges 13:4) it is a reference to different spices added to it. We have many biblical stories about wine. Two examples are Proverbs 23:29-35 and Psalm 104:15.

Drugs: Drugs may be chemical substances which when used medically under proper medical guidance can lead to better health. Drugs are produced from the vegetable kingdom, or developed by chemists in laboratories. All non-medical use is a misuse of drugs. According to the WHO and UN, drug dependency is a state within the person, characterised by a compulsion to take a drug in order to experience psychic effects. Drug craving is the longing for the experience the drug has given a person earlier. In the UN Human Rights Convention on the Childs Rights, article 33 talks about drugs:

"State Parties shall take all proper measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from illicit drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in illicit production and trafficking of such substances."

Unfortunately this UN declaration states nothing about alcohol and children.

We have no clear stories in the Bible about drugs, especially designer drugs such as ecstasy and ice, which are popular among youth today. We can find little help in the biblical context about how to act in our present drug situation. •

"The importance of the convention on the rights of the child for the child and adolescent workers in Peru"

BY PATRICIA CRUZADO MUÑOZ

These two contributions were prepared for the discussions which took place in the Commemorative Meeting on the Tenth Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, organised by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and the Child Rights Committee, from the perspective of child workers in Geneva, September 1999.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CONVENTION FOR CHILD WORKERS OF PERU

For us child and adolescent workers, the convention, like the universal declaration, as an international judicial instrument, defending the rights of all children, boys and girls, is a very big step forward, and very important for us, because it is universal and because it takes account of all children, as legal subjects, without discrimination regarding race, sex, language or religious or political beliefs.

It considers the child or adolescent as a social entity, that is to say, in the same way as any person who contributes in one way or another to the development of our society; consequently we are considered and seen as subjects and not objects, as persons, and our right is recognised, to participate, to express an opinion, to organise ourselves, and to enjoy protection as children, from all forms of exploitation in the field of work (convention art. 32.)

In several of the articles of the convention, mention is made of the superior interest of the child, which means for us that all our needs and interests belong to the whole population and consequently they are not something isolated from it or outside it.

Patricia Muñoz © Chris Black / WCC

THE CONVENTION SEEN FROM OUR OWN EXPERIENCE AND PERSPECTIVES AS CHILD WORKERS

From our own experience of life, we child and adolescent workers have reviewed and analysed the CONVENTION and see that the articles are important and very well set out, but unhappily it is difficult for some persons truly to put them into practice.

In our adult-centred society, where maturity is considered to be synonymous with adulthood and the capacity of children and adolescents to contribute is still not recognised, we are prevented from participating, giving our opinion and taking decisions on those issues which concern us (convention art.12), at both national and international level. For example:

national and international level. For example:

a) To participate as a child and adolescent organisation (convention art. 15) with our own originality in meetings with the authorities of our countries and to see that they remain incredulous with regard to what we say and what we propose, and persons who represent international institutions who not only doubt what we say, but even dare to injure us with negative adjectives and even at times insult us.

b) We had decided to participate with a delegation from our Latin-American and Caribbean movement at the international conferences to be held in Amsterdam, Holland 1997, Oslo, Norway 1997 and Geneva in 1998, which were planned by the governments of the countries concerned and organising bodies, whom we also asked if we could attend with equal numbers of participants (20 ministers, 20 of our representatives decision from Kundapur - India, 1996 and Lima - Peru 1997), the child and adolescent worker participants being representatives from the organisations and movements in our region. We established principles and elected our delegates to represent us as these mentioned conferences, and in Oslo what happened was that they closed the places, prevented us from presenting our own message and ill-treated us, ejecting us from the meeting place. This has remained fixed in the memories of the child workers form Latin America and the Caribbean; as have the threats which were made that they would take away our funding if we continued to organise according to our own autonomous criteria and our message based on our lives for all children. All this brought us problems but also moments of deep and serious reflection and we have not taken down our guard, but we feel ourselves stronger than before despite the threats. We propose to evaluate this whole process in greater depth, with the New Convention document in our hands, in our National Meetings, and also at the regional level Latin American meetings, which are planned to take place during the first half of next year, as a sign of hope for a new millennium from the child and adolescent workers' point of view.

The authorities who worked out and drew up the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, have done well, but as boy and girl child workers we can see in practice that they are still a long way from our own reality, because on many occasions not only do they contradict and misunderstand, but even have doubts about us, what we say and what we think and feel, accusing us of being manipulated by the people accompanying us and provide us with orientation, facilitating our actions, and this is hurtful for us, because they make us feel badly and above all we feel it as an insult when they doubt our word and our proposals.

Suggestions for the future

As child and adolescent workers, we would like to be recognised in the convention as social protagonists in order to be able to carry out our social role.

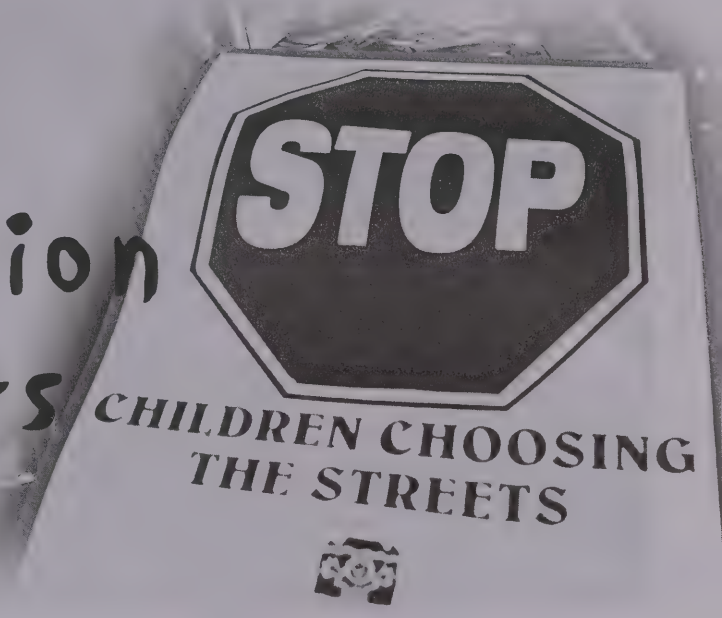
Finally we know that there is still a long battle ahead of us to ensure that the churches, governments and society in general will respect "child rights" and, above all, for them to listen to us and recognise that through our organisation we are working for human dignity.

We have the hope and are working to ensure that one day we may be able to exercise our social role side by side with young people, mothers, farmers, workers, old persons, etc., and so be able to share proposals which will make of our planet a place, or a space, where we can all express ourselves respectfully, gently and confidently regarding what we are doing as human beings to live our lives with dignity.

Geneva, 12 April, 2000

Patricia Cruzado Muñoz is 18 years old and is a member not only of the Global Ecumenical Children's Network but also a Delegate of the Movement of Child Workers of Peru. Patricia began her social solidarity activities at the age of 7. She began working at the age of 7 to help improve her family's economic situation and to be able to pay the cost of her school studies. Presently Patricia is working as a gardener and is studying computer systems in the evenings. In January 2000 she participated in a WCC capacity-building programme

The Convention on the Rights of the Child



BY ARNOLD ENGEL

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) can be well implemented in developing and underdeveloped countries. The CRC, the most widely signed human rights convention in the world, has been in place for ten years yet we are still witness to obvious violations of the convention world-wide. It is seemingly a matter of the United Nations and UNICEF's having to lead the way as watchdogs for children.

It is very difficult to raise the standard of living for children without bringing up the standard of living for the entire population. Similarly, it is proving difficult to eradicate child labour without reshuffling the economy or causing an upheaval of the workforce.

Many of the articles in the CRC deal with issues pertaining only to children, while others are problems shared equally by adults. Many possible reforms in developing and underdeveloped countries, such as improved health programmes, would improve the quality of life for adults and, even more so, children, due to the high percentage of infant mortality.

Basically, improvements in three fields could halt the cycles of poverty and hunger. **Education, health, and the economy**, if improved, could drastically change a country. In developing and underdeveloped countries three major problems hinder development: education, economy, and health including nutrition are, in some cases, at primitive levels. Each one of these problems has identifiable causes.

To start with, large-scale education problems are due either to a lack of schools, the high costs of attending them, or of children's having to work for a living.

Health problems can be attributed to climate, lack of proper nutrition and primary care infrastructure, problems with distribution of drugs and, in most cases, lack of access to potable water. Malaria is a good example of how climate causes health problems because the cure for malaria used in temperate zones can not be used effectively in equatorial zones. This means that pharmaceutical companies in industrialised countries have decided that it is not good business to develop a cure for equatorial malaria because of the low profit margin. Lack of good nutrition and/or clean water can place people in a weakened state that leaves them susceptible to diseases they normally could resist. Children are at an even greater risk.

Finally, the weakness and instability of developing and underdeveloped countries can be associated with their exports. Most underdeveloped countries export commodities that are unnecessary to them and import needed commodities, such as food. In this system, they are not self-sufficient and can be drastically affected by changes in commodity prices. In other words, an industrialised country (or a multinational corporation) uses a developing or underdeveloped country to supply itself. This is one of the reasons that the economies of developing and underdeveloped countries are stalling now; it is also why (especially in Africa) they became this way. Mercantilism, exemplified by a colony supplying the "motherland", has ruined many economies and crippled many countries.

Plans of action and strategies for change

To protect children's rights on a large-scale basis, we must ensure both proper infrastructure and suitable living conditions. Living standards must improve if children's lives are to improve.

It is very hard to address children's rights of in a country where there is war or where the population is desperate for its next meal. It is possible to address children's rights in industrialised countries because the proper infrastructure is already in place.

Essentially, we must raise the standard of living in developing and underdeveloped countries in order to provide a chance of cementing children's rights.

An effective solution would be to pair up industrialised countries with underdeveloped and developing countries in order to improve the situations in the latter. Countries could be paired based on their complementary strengths and weaknesses. States leading the world in agricultural techniques would help those with famine. Nations that are plentiful in water would help those with contaminated water. Industrialised countries could share their experiences and take roles in the development of a poorer nation's economy. Those nations on the leading edge in the pharmaceutical world could be commissioned to develop vaccines and cures for diseases of the equatorial climate. For example, Russia, which is ranked fourth in the world in wheat production, could be paired up with Swaziland, which ranks 118th out of 120 countries analysed. Another pair could be Switzerland, which ranks first in the world in its ratio of hospital beds to people, and Nepal which ranks last of countries analysed.

Essentially, industrialised states could take a true interest in developing these countries one by one, region by region. It is their spirit of cooperation in the true sense of the word that will help develop these countries.

It is in the world's best interest to have a better developed planet, and a great way to accomplish that is to have industrialised nations helping, and not hindering, developing or underdeveloped nations. This type of plan would provide cures for diseases, increase food availability, improve the economy, and provide higher standards of education. This plan would also raise part of the world out of poverty and facilitate the implementation of children's rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This "pairing" theory of the implementation of the CRC can be taken one step further. On a grass-roots level, the plan will succeed only if there is strong support from both community and religious groups. These institutions must help to facilitate the change in developing and underdeveloped countries.

The support of world-wide religious organisations, such as the World Council of Churches, is crucial to ensuring that these reforms are carried out. The many international non-governmental organisations with offices, hostels, or shelters in underdeveloped or developing countries could help by providing services for locals. These organisations could provide medical care, educational services and nutrition. This type of action is already taking place; however, it is in dire need of financing. The pairing system could supply funding and advice to local organisations which directly affect the lives of many in a positive way.

Children's rights can only truly be implemented on a large scale in developing and underdeveloped countries if the conditions for change are ripe. Industrialised nations need to help out other nations by working with them to solve individual and regional problems. Once we improve the living conditions and have the proper infrastructure in place, it will be relatively easy (compared to the current situation) to reform children's rights. This must be considered as a global project, calling on the efforts of the UN and many of its divisions. Countries must take pride in what they are doing and realise that the benefits are mutual and that, in the end, we all reap them. It is a project that can be realised, and one whose results would certainly change the world in a truly beneficial way for all. •

Works cited and consulted:

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International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)/ World Bank database, 1998; (http://www.worldbank.org); and International Monetary Fund (IMF); (http://www.imf.org).

Arnold Engels is 14 years old from Canada. He became involved in activities in solidarity with marginalised children when he was just 11 years old. Arnold attended several children leadership / human rights training sessions during weekends. He has already given several speeches to labour organisations at national and international meetings. His first participation in the WCC-Global Ecumenical Children's Network activities was in support to the Global March in 1997, in Geneva, when he came as part of the Free the Children *Delegation.*

Arnold Engels © Arigatou Foundation

United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child

(Summary)

PREAMBLE

The preamble: recalls the basic principles of the United Nations and specific provisions to certain relevant human rights treaties and proclamations; reaffirms the fact that children, because of their vulnerability, need special care and protection; and places special emphasis on the primary caring and protective responsibility of the family, the need for legal and other protection of the child before and after birth, the importance of respect for the cultural values of the child's community, and the vital role of international cooperation in achieving the realisation of children's rights.

ARTICLE

1. Definition of a child
All persons under 18, unless by law majority is attained at an earlier age.

2. Non-discrimination
The principle that all rights apply to all children without exception, and the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination. The State must not violate any right, and must take positive action to promote them all.

3. Best interests of the child
All actions concerning the child should take full account of his or her best interests. The state is to provide adequate care when parents or others responsible fail to do so.

4. Implementation of rights
The State's obligation to translate the rights in the Convention into reality.

Sierra Leone © Peter Williams / WCC

5. Parental guidance and the child's evolving capacities
The State's duty to respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and the wider family to provide guidance appropriate to the child's evolving capacities.

6. Survival and development
The inherent right to life, and the State's obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.

7. Name and nationality
The right to have a name from birth and to be granted a nationality.

8. Preservation of identity
The State's obligation to protect and, if necessary, re-establish the basic aspects of a child's identity (name, nationality and family ties).

9. Separation from parents
The child's right to live with his/her parents unless this is deemed incompatible with his/her best interests; the right to maintain contact with both parents if separated from one or both; the duties of States in cases where such separation results from State action.

10. Family reunification
The right of children and their parents to leave any country and to enter their own in order to be reunited or to maintain the child-parent relationship.

11. Illicit transfer and non-return
The State's obligation to try to prevent and remedy the kidnapping or retention of children abroad by a parent or third party.

12. The child's opinion
The child's right to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

13. Freedom of expression
The child's right to obtain and make known information, and to express his or her views, unless this would violate the rights of others.

14. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
The child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance and national law.

15. Freedom of association
The right of children to meet with others and to join or set up associations, unless the fact of doing so violates the rights of others.

16. Protection of privacy
The right to protection from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence, and from libel/slander.

17. Access to appropriate information
The role of the media in disseminating information to children that is consistent with moral well-being and knowledge and understanding among peoples, and respects the child's cultural background. The State is to take measures to encourage this and to protect children from harmful materials.

18. Parental responsibilities
The principle that both parents have joint primary responsibility for bringing up their children, and that the State should support them in this task.

19. Protection from abuse and neglect
The State's obligation to protect children from all forms of maltreatment perpetrated by parents or others responsible for their care, and to undertake preventive and treatment programmes in this regard.

20. Protection of children without families
The State's obligation to provide special protection for children deprived of their family environment and to ensure that appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement is made available to them, taking into account the child's cultural background.

21. Adoption
In countries where adoption is recognised and/or allowed, it shall only be carried out in the best interests of the child, with all necessary safeguards for a given child and authorisation by the competent authorities.

22. Refugee children
Special protection to be granted to children who are refugees or seeking refugee status, and the State's obligation to cooperate with competent organisations providing such protection and assistance.

23. Handicapped children
The right of handicapped children to special care, education and training designed to help them to achieve greatest possible self-reliance and to lead a full and active life in society.

24. Health and health services
The right to the highest level of health possible and to access to health and medical services, with special emphasis on primary and preventive health care, public health education and the diminution of infant mortality. The State's obligation to work towards the

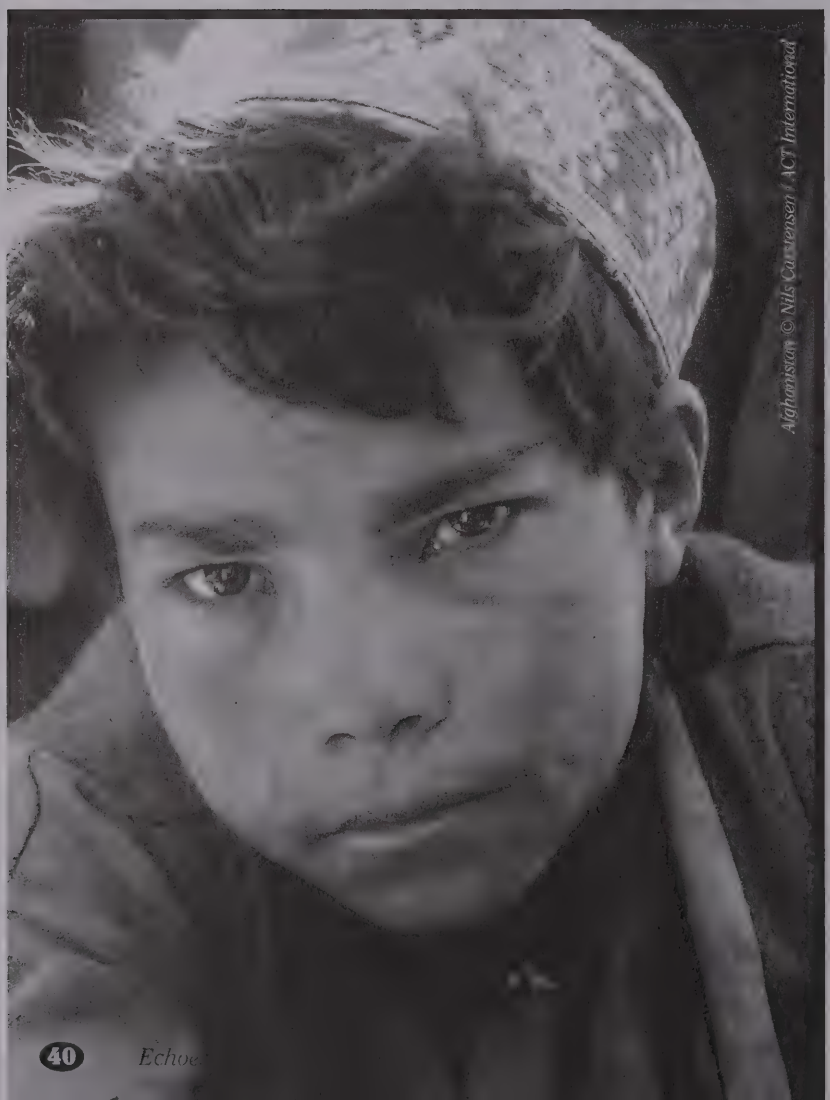
laid on the need for international cooperation to ensure this right.

25. Periodic review of placement
The right of children placed by the State for reasons of care, protection or treatment to have all aspects of that placement evaluated regularly.

26. Social security
The right of children to benefit from social security.

27. Standard of living
The right of children to benefit from an adequate standard of living, the primary responsibility of parents to provide this, and the State's duty to ensure that this responsibility is first fulfillable and then fulfilled, where necessary through the recovery of maintenance.

28. Education
The child's right to education, and the State's duty to ensure that primary education at least is made free and compulsory. Administration of school discipline is to reflect the child's human dignity. Emphasis is laid on the need for international cooperation to ensure this right.



29. Aims of education
The State's recognition that education should be directed at developing the child's personality and talents, preparing the child for active life as an adult, fostering respect for basic human rights and developing respect for the child's own cultural and national values and those of others.

30. Children of minorities or indigenous peoples
The right of children of minority communities and indigenous peoples to enjoy their own culture and to practice their own religion and language.

31. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities
The right of children to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

32. Child labour
The State's obligation to protect children from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to their health, education or development, to set minimum ages for employment, and to regulate conditions of employment.

33. Drug abuse
The child's right to protection from the use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs and from being involved in their production of distribution.

34. Sexual exploitation
The child's right to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

35. Sale, trafficking and abduction
The State's obligation to make every effort to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children.

36. Other forms of exploitation
The child's right to protection from all other forms of exploitation not covered in articles 32, 33, 34 and 35.

37. Torture and deprivation of liberty
The prohibition of torture, cruel treatment or punishment, capital punishment, life imprisonment, and unlawful arrest or deprivation of liberty. The principles of appropriate treatment, separation from detained adults, contact with family and access to legal and other assistance.

38. Armed conflicts
The obligation of States to respect and ensure respect for humanitarian law as it applies to children. The principle that no child under 15 takes a direct part in hostilities or be recruited into the armed forces, and that all children affected by armed conflict benefit from protection and care.

Australia © Peter Williams / WCC

39. Rehabilitative care
The State's obligation to ensure that child victims of armed conflicts, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social reintegration.

40. Administration of juvenile justice
The right of children alleged or recognised as having committed an offence to respect for their human rights and, in particular, to benefit from all aspects of the due process of law, including legal or other assistance in preparing and presenting their defence. The principle that recourse to judicial proceedings and institutional placements should be avoided wherever possible and appropriate.

41. Respect for existing standards
The principle that, if any standards set in national law or other applicable international instruments are higher than those of this Convention, it is the higher standard that applies.

Implementation and entry into force

The provisions of articles 42-54 notably foresee:
1) the State's obligation to make the rights contained in this Convention widely known to both adults and children.

2) the setting up of a Committee on the Rights of the child composed of ten experts, which will consider reports that States Parties to the Convention are to sub-

mit two years after ratification and every live years thereafter. The Convention enters into force – and the Committee would therefore be set up – once 20 countries have ratified it.

3) States Parties are to make their reports widely available to the general public.

4) The Committee may propose that special studies be undertaken on specific issues relating to the rights of the child, and may make its evaluations known to each State Party concerned as well as to the UN General Assembly.

5) In order to "foster the effect implementation of the Convention and to encourage international cooperation", the specialised agencies of the UN (such as the ILO, WHO and UNESCO) and UNICEF would be able to attend the meetings of the Committee. Together with any other body recognised as "competent", including NGOs in consultative status with the UN and UN organs such as the UNHCR, they can submit pertinent information to the Committee and be asked to advise on the optimal implementation of the Convention.

Some links to web sites dedicated to children

http://www.streetkids.org
Street Kids International confronts why some children and youth around the world are forced onto the street, and helps them achieve dignity and self-reliance, health and security.

http://www.defence-for-children.org
Defence for Children international (DCI) is an independent non-governmental organisation set up during the International Year of the Child (1979) to ensure ongoing, practical, systematic and concerted international action specially directed towards promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

http://www.savethechildren.org
Save the Children
Children today – in the United States and around the world – face greater challenges than ever before. More children are born into poverty and suffer from war and natural disaster than at any other time in modern history. Never has there been such global consensus on the need to protect the rights and well-being of children everywhere.

To help these children get the best possible start in life, Save the Children is promoting locally appropriate programs in education, health care, environmentally sound agriculture, and economic productivity.

http://www.unicef.org/
UNICEF works in 161 countries, areas and territories on solutions to the problems plaguing poor children and their families and on ways to realise their rights. Its activities are as varied as the challenges it faces, encouraging the care and stimulation that offer the best possible start in life, helping prevent childhood illness and death, making pregnancy and childbirth safe, combating discrimination and cooperating with communities to ensure that girls as well as boys attend school.

Part of the United Nations system, UNICEF has an enviable mandate and mission, to advocate for children's rights and help meet their needs.

http://www.child-soldiers.org/
The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers was formed in June 1998 to advocate for the adoption of, and adherence to, national, regional and international legal standards (including an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child) prohibiting the military recruitment and use in hostilities of any person younger than eighteen years of age; and the recognition and enforcement of this standard by all armed forces and armed groups, both governmental and non-governmental.

The Coalition was founded by six international NGOs – Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Save the Children Alliance, Jesuit Refugee Service, the Quaker United Nations Office - Geneva, and International Federation Terre des Hommes – and later joined by Defence for Children International, World Vision International, and regional NGOs from Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. The Coalition has also established partners and national coalitions which are engaged in advocacy, campaigns and public education in nearly 40 countries (see separate section on National Coalition Activities). The Coalition has established and maintained active links with UNICEF, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNHCHR and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

http://www.gmfc.org/en/index_html
The Global Movement for Children is a collection of people and organisations around the world dedicated to promoting the rights of the child. The movement is about participation, action and accountability involving everyone. The Global Movement for Children is a force for

change, calling for people throughout the world to take action and protect the rights of children. We all have a role to play – leaders and citizens, public and private organisations, children and young people.
The core of the Movement will be adults and children, working together. It will not be enough for adults to change the world for children – they must change the world with children. Young people have important things to contribute, and they must be given every opportunity to speak.

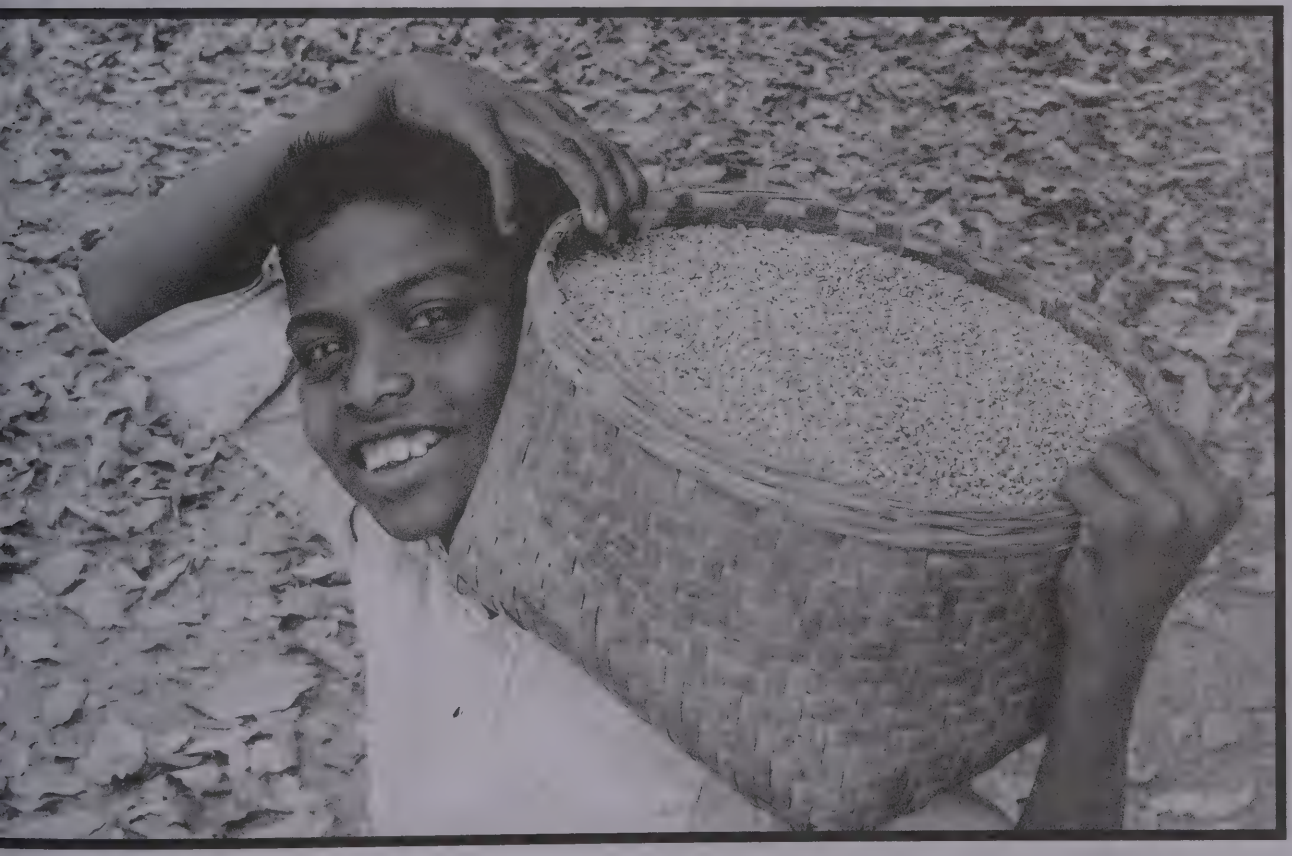
http://www.ecpat.net/eng/index.asp
End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) is a network of organisations and individuals working together for the elimination of child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes. It seeks to encourage the world community to ensure that children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights free from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/ceos/
Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section
Subsite of the Criminal Division of the United States Department of Justice website. CEOS contains information about child pornography, child predators, and traffickers of women and children including information on how to report child pornography on the Internet; investigating and prosecuting exploitation of children; safety tips for parents and children; international aspects of child exploitation; and more.

http://www.gnrc.ne.jp/
Global Network of Religions for Children has as its purpose to assemble religious people who share the same wishes for children to offer sincere prayers and to reach mutual understanding and agreement.

http://www.womenscommission.org/
The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children works to ensure that refugee and displaced women, children and adolescents are given protection, encouraged to participate, and have access to education, health services and livelihood opportunities. Through a vigorous and comprehensive program of advocacy, supported by extensive research and technical expertise, the Women's Commission serves as an expert resource and works with governments, United Nations agencies, international and local non-governmental organisations, and donors to improve the lives of displaced women and children. The Women's Commission was founded in 1989 under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee.

http://www.ecumenicalyouth.org/
The World Council of Churches Youth Web Site seeks to strengthen the ecumenical youth movement and young people's solidarity networks, promote ecumenism and the search for Christian unity among young Christians. This is a place where young people across cultures and across confessions can meet, discuss, share and learn from each other, as well as from the information provided on site.



India © John Taylor / WCC

The events of September 11th

in the US literally rocked the world. Since then countless images of grief, anger, war, revenge and even hatred have filled the TV screens along with some footage of peace marches in many countries.

The ecumenical community has also its own reactions. As a matter of record ECHOES provides the text of some statements and letters which emanated from within the US, the WCC, and the Christian Conference of Asia.

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RELIGIOUS LEADERS ENDORSE INTERFAITH STATEMENT CALLING FOR A FAITH-ROOTED RESPONSE TO TERRORISM

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA)

DENY THEM THEIR VICTORY: A RELIGIOUS RESPONSE TO TERRORISM

We, American religious leaders, share the broken hearts of our fellow citizens. The worst terrorist attack in history that assaulted New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, has been felt in every American community. Each life lost was of unique and sacred value in the eyes of God, and the connections Americans feel to those lives run very deep. In the face of such a cruel catastrophe, it is a time to look to God and to each other for the strength we need and the response we will make. We must dig deep to the roots of our faith for sustenance, solace, and wisdom.

First, we must find a word of consolation for the untold pain and suffering of our people. Our congregations will offer their practical and pastoral resources to bind up the wounds of the nation. We can become safe places to weep and secure places to begin rebuilding our shattered lives and communities. Our houses of worship should become public arenas for common prayer, community discussion, eventual healing, and forgiveness.

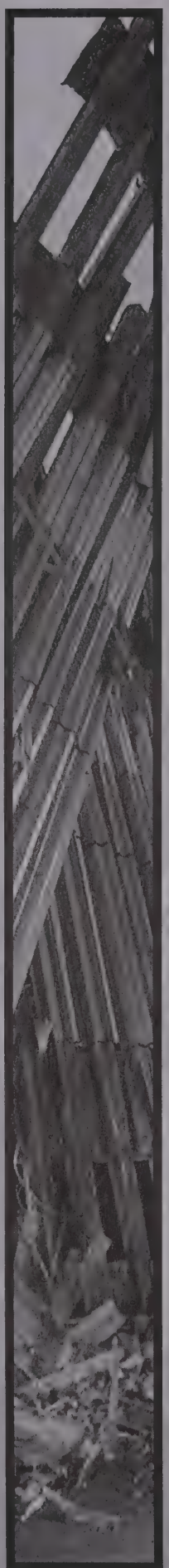
Second, we offer a word of sober restraint as our nation discerns what its response will be. We share the deep anger toward those who so callously and massively destroy innocent lives, no matter what the grievances or injustices invoked. In the name of God, we too demand that those responsible for these utterly evil acts be found and brought to justice. Those culpable must not escape accountability. But we must not, out of anger and vengeance, indiscriminately retaliate in ways that bring on even more loss of innocent life. We pray that President Bush and members of Congress will seek the wisdom of God as they decide upon the appropriate response.

Third, we face deep and profound questions of what this attack on America will do to us as a nation. The terrorists have offered us a stark view of the world they would create, where the remedy to every human grievance and injustice is a resort to the random and cowardly violence of revenge – even against the most innocent. Having taken thousands of our lives, attacked our national symbols, forced our political leaders to flee their chambers of governance, disrupted our work and families, and struck fear into the hearts of our children, the terrorists must feel victorious.

But we can deny them their victory by refusing to submit to a world created in their image. Terrorism inflicts not only death and destruction but also emotional oppression to further its aims. We must not allow this terror to drive us away from being the people God has called us to be. We assert the vision of community, tolerance, compassion, justice, and the sacredness of human life, which lies at the heart of all our religious traditions. America must be a safe place for all our citizens in all their diversity. It is especially important that our citizens who share national origins, ethnicity, or religion with whoever attacked us are, themselves, protected among us.

Our American illusion of invulnerability has been shattered. From now on, we will look at the world in a different way, and this attack on our life as a nation will become a test of our national character. Let us make the right choices in this crisis – to pray, act, and unite against the bitter fruits of division, hatred, and violence. Let us rededicate ourselves to global peace, human dignity, and the eradication of injustice that breeds rage and vengeance

As we gather in our houses of worship, let us begin a process of seeking the healing and grace of God.



"THE ANSWER TO TERRORISM SHOULD NOT LEAD TO MORE VIOLENCE AND TERROR"

WCC general secretary writes to UN secretary-general

"I write to thank you for the wise and measured leadership you have given your staff, the United Nations and the peoples of the world in the difficult period since the tragic, heart-rending day of 11 September.

We were especially grateful for your address to the General Assembly on 24 September. Your words of encouragement in the face of widespread despair, your message of hope, and your call for the rejection of the path of violence were both poignant and timely.

As you have so clearly pointed out, these attacks have shown the extreme vulnerability of all nations, and indeed the fragility of the present global system. A world in which ever greater numbers of nations and peoples are being consigned to extreme poverty while great wealth accumulates in others is inherently unstable and vulnerable to acts of extreme violence. A world in which the spirit, logic and practice of war dominate the policies of powerful nations, and in which these are reflected back to the peoples of the world through an increasingly monochrome global media, is a world that breeds violence.

The violence of terrorism – in all its many forms – is abhorrent to all who believe human life is a gift of God and therefore infinitely precious. Every attempt to intimidate others by inflicting indiscriminate death and injury upon them is to be universally condemned. The answer to terrorism, however, cannot be to respond in kind, for this can lead only to more violence and terror. Instead a concerted effort of all nations is needed to remove any possible justification for such acts.

So long as the cries of those humiliated by unremitting injustice, by the systematic deprivation of their rights, and by the arrogance of power of those who possess unchallenged military might are ignored or neglected by a seemingly uncaring world, terrorism will not be overcome. The answer to terrorism must be found in redressing these wrongs that breed violence between and within nations.

We hope and pray that the response to the terrible tragedies of 11 September will mark a turning point for a global reassessment of our collective responsibility to heal the wounds and offer new perspectives to our world. Certainly it is this, not the language of war, that would be the finest tribute to those who lost their lives in these terrible attacks.

In the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence launched by the World Council of Churches early this year, churches and individual Christians around the world are striving to break the rising spiral of retributive violence that has brought so much pain and suffering to people through the ages. In declaring this Decade, the WCC assembly in Harare (1998) gave recognition to the UN "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World". The assembly was acutely aware of the fact that Christians have often contributed to shaping a culture of violence. We have often blessed the war-makers and offered justification for violence. Thus the Decade represents a call to repentance and calls churches and individual Christians to reflect deeply on the violence we bear within us and seek to free ourselves from its bondage. It also calls us to pursue ever more vigorously a Dialogue among Civilisations, and to deepen interreligious dialogue with all those who believe that God wills justice and peace for all peoples.

We hope that the nations and their leaders will now approach their responsibilities in a similar way. This is not a time for the building of coalitions of states that accede to or agree to participate in further acts of retaliation or aggression. It is rather an opportunity to rally the peoples and the nations to a renewed universal commitment to the aims of the Charter of the United Nations and to forge a new global force for justice. As you have so rightly put it, the most effective international coalition to overcome the threat of terrorism is the United Nations itself, and it is, as you put it, "the natural forum" that "alone can give global legitimacy" to this effort. Only together can the nations and their peoples hope to achieve true peace and security. The messages of compassion that have been sent from the four corners of the world to the government and people of the United States need to be embodied in policies and acts of compassion for all those who languish now in abject poverty and armed conflict.

The reaction to these acts must not be greater isolationism, but rather should lead all nations to join fully in the efforts of the international community to face common challenges, and there to assume their full share of obligations under the Charter, financial and other, to the United Nations.

The reaction to these acts must not be a global retreat back into militarism, doctrines of national security or states of emergency that suspend guarantees and protection of fundamental human rights. Democracy has been purchased at too high a price for its freedoms again to be sacrificed. Reliance on notions of security based on superior military power must give way to new approaches that seek human security based on justice for all.

Respect for and the strengthening of the rule of law at both national and international levels is the basis of common security and true justice. It must not be allowed to erode further. Such justice must also extend to those alleged to be responsible for these and similar acts of terrorism who should be brought before impartial courts to answer to charges. Vigilante justice under any guise is another form of terrorism and cannot be condoned.

At this session of the General Assembly intensive debates will be held on strengthening measures to combat international terrorism. In this connection we hope that all nations will now see the urgency of ratifying the Rome Statutes of the International Criminal Court in order that it can be established as soon as possible.

The reaction to these acts must not be to close all doors to those seeking asylum from terror, to migrants driven from their homes by extreme poverty, to refugees fleeing from war and internal conflict. The international protection regimes must not now be weakened, but strengthened to comprehend those for whom international protections are still inadequate or not scrupulously respected.

Finally, the response to these inhuman acts must not be to stigmatise any national, ethnic or religious group. The hypothesis of a "clash of civilisations" must not be allowed to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is the time for universal dialogue, tolerance and acts of compassion.

We are grateful for your leadership in the realisation of these goals, and reassure you and your staff of our continued prayers that God guide and sustain you in your efforts on behalf of a needy world."

Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser

An Open Letter to George W. Bush, president of the United States of America

from the Christian Conference of Asia

Dear President Bush:

On behalf of the Christian Conference of Asia, an ecumenical organisation based in Hong Kong, we would like to convey our deepest sympathy to the families of the victims of the hijacking attacks in the US last September 11. We feel very deeply with all the American people and other affected nationals as you all grieve the loss of innocent lives, including the lives of the rescue workers who had put their own lives at risk in the course of their duty.

In our grief and solidarity with you, we strongly condemn such a heinous crime against humanity, even as we condemn all forms of violence against any people, nation or community.

As an ecumenical organisation comprising of 221 member Churches and National Councils of Churches from 18 Asian countries, with a membership of more than 55 million individuals, we strongly believe that suffering at any level by anyone anywhere must be overcome. Our faith always reminds us that God sent to the world the Christ so that everyone might have the "fullness of life".

Aware of the many forms of violence that continue to be faced by the peoples of Asia, the Christian Conference of Asia has affirmed our ecumenical mission of proclaiming in word and deed the saving will of God for fullness of life for all. As a concrete form of this proclamation, we have committed ourselves to the work of "Cultivating the Culture of Peace" as a way of overcoming violence. We made this commitment early this year in the wake of the violence that continues to plague many parts of Asia – due to injustice and poverty, to ethnic and religious enmity, to political and cultural rivalries, and to senseless power struggle and arms race.

It is in this spirit that we appeal to you, the US government and all its allies, including a number of governments from Asia, to prayerfully think of how best to deal with the situation that has been created following the September 11 incident.

We who have lived in a violence-ridden region like Asia know how the cycle of violence can only breed more violence. We also know what it is like when a politically – or economically – motivated war is turned into a religious war. Until now, we continue to live with this problem here in Asia. We therefore need to clarify that this is not a war of religions or of civilisations. We also must understand what it is like to feel real anger and rage at injustice, suffering, and oppression.

In solidarity with you, we want to share with you our own hard-earned lesson: to carefully understand the real roots of the problem. What very often lies beneath "terrorism" or "fundamentalism" is a deep anger or rage resulting from a deep sense of threat or exclusion as well as long exposure to violence itself. It is amazing to know that a number of suicide bombers in some Asian countries are actually orphans whose parents were killed in previous violent experiences. We particularly note that the situation of the Palestinians and Iraqi civilians, and especially the aspiration of the Palestinians for a clearly Palestinian state, is in need of urgent attention by the international community.

We do not support any call for military war, whether through strikes by air, land or sea. We are in fact concerned about how your call for support from other governments can further excite communal violence in many Asian countries along religious and communal lines. Even as there are talks about "proportionate response", we know that Afghanistan and several Asian countries are already ravaged by years of war and are still trying to survive. It is very clear that any course of action you will decide on will drastically affect Asian peoples. And so we ask that even as you consider the human rights of the thousands who were killed on September 11, it is also important to seriously consider the human rights of the Afghan and other Asian peoples. We are particularly concerned about the people of Pakistan, including the Christians who are a minority there, who seem to be caught in the middle of all this.

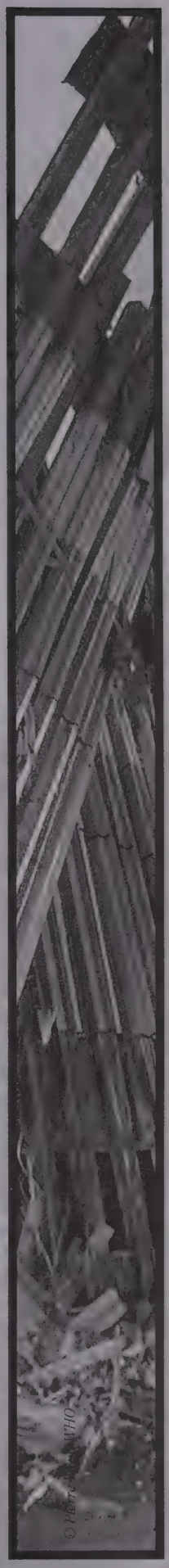
Military retaliation will not be the best way to deal with the September 11 attacks. It may be the response expected of a powerful nation like the United States. It may also be the expected response of a group of people who are ready to die and would not mind others dying with them in the process. But the real proof of power is in how the United States, and all countries in solidarity with her, can learn and live out the hard way of genuine peace with justice.

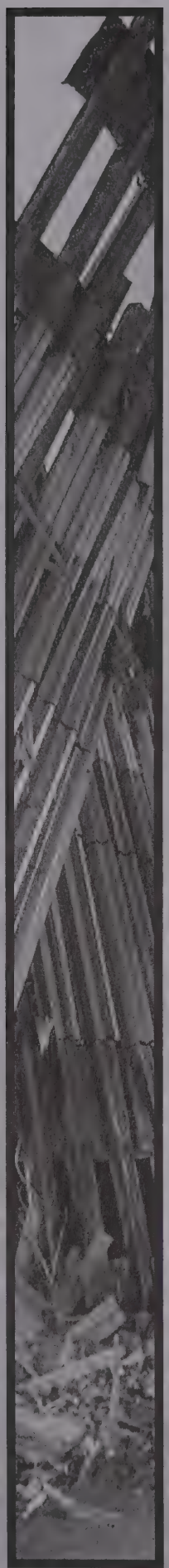
It is time that we all begin to think of security not in terms of the usual "national security" concept which is ensured by military might and arms capability. If we are to hold this one world together, we need to work for a "common security and universal prosperity" for all – ensured by the meeting of people's most basic needs for food and land; for respect of their civil and political rights and their basic human aspirations. We must join hands to attain this common security of peace, mutual understanding and goodwill to all.

Our prayer remains: "Give peace a chance".

Very sincerely,

AHN Jae Woong
General Secretary





BEING CHURCH TODAY IN AFRICA

by Samuel Kobia

The first year of the third millennium has been permanently marked by the events that have radically changed the world as we have known it. The bombings on September 11 of New York City and Washington, DC in the USA must be condemned for their gross violation of the sanctity of life. While the destruction of the icons of economic and military might of the only superpower in the world could well be considered as a dramatic way of expressing grievances, there is no justification whatsoever for the violent ending of lives of thousands of innocent people.

In response to the bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon President Bush declared what he defines as "the first war of the twenty-first century". As church we must take the language of war extremely seriously because it means more destruction of more innocent lives. From a Christian perspective it is not ethically and spiritually acceptable to speak lightly of war. The perpetrators of the bombings must be made to account, but that ought to be done within the context of a broader commitment to justice and in the framework of international law.

To justify the bombing of Afghanistan the US evokes Article 51 of the UN Charter on the right to self-defense. But as Geoffrey Robertson, a leading British human rights lawyer, correctly argues, "self-defense is a primitive doctrine, severely limited in a necessity which is instant and overwhelming."

In our view it would have been preferable to use the precedent set by the UN Security council in dealing with crimes against humanity in former Yugoslavia or genocide in Rwanda. While awaiting for the coming into being of the International Criminal Court, the UN Security council could have been asked to establish an ad hoc tribunal to try the prime suspect Osama bin Laden and the Taliban government key leaders who have harbored and supported him and his Al Qaida organisation. That approach could have met wider acceptance internationally than the indiscriminate bombing of Afghanistan that the US and her allies have opted for. As Robertson further observes, "the murder of enemy leaders cannot be a legitimate objective of any modern war. It was, admittedly, Churchill's preferred fate for top Nazis, but Truman insisted on that trial at Nuremberg because "'undiscriminating executions or punishments without definite findings of guilt, fairly arrived at, would not sit easily on the American conscience to be remembered by our children with pride.' Tony Blair should remind the US President of those words..." It is very unlikely that many Americans today are aware of those well thought-out views of their former president.

But besides talking of war we must look at the situation more critically. We should be concerned with the language of war from the White House because it exhibits the mentality of religious dualist fundamentalism strikingly similar to the language of the Taliban. Whether it is Christian or Muslim, fundamentalism and religious extremism is dangerous, as we know from history. The dualistic mentality that only sees "good and evil", "right and wrong", and refuses to accept the moral ambiguity of human existence suggests that the only way to respond to violence is through violence. The leader of the only superpower in the world goes on to intimidate the weaker nations: you are either on our side or on the side of the terrorists, there is no third way! He asks us to condemn the killings of innocent people by the terrorists (which we of course do), but in the same breath he asks us to support the killings of other innocent people by Americans and British (which we of course cannot do). Our answer should be to denounce and condemn any killings of innocent people anywhere in the world and by anybody in the world. As Christians we must say very clearly that there is an alternative way; the way of cultivating peace with justice for all; the way of restorative justice which provides true peace and security for the nations and peoples of our world.

We should gain a clear perspective of what is at stake. The world is being led on the warpath not only because of the loss of six thousand lives, but more so because the security of the rich has been threatened. We are all well aware that the security of millions of poverty stricken Americans alongside that of the majority of two-thirds of the world population is in a permanent state of threat. Their security is threatened by not only the silent violence of hunger, starvation and disease, but by real violence that leads to death, albeit in less dramatic ways than the events of September 11th. But the death of the millions of the wretched of the earth does not threaten the security of the rich and powerful and therefore does not motivate the President of America to lead the world to war against poverty and injustices. Nor did the death of hundreds of Kenyans at the hands of terrorists elicit similar response from the White House. It may well be that September 11th could have been avoided if America had declared war against terrorism after the East Africa bombings of 1998. But those who died then, by the hundreds, were not Americans but Africans whose lives matter little to the rich and powerful in the USA.

The church is called to lead in seeking for the root causes of the increasing violence in the world. The September 11th bombings should serve as a wake-up call to humankind in the twenty-first century. One of the lessons to learn from those events is that security does not flow from the fountain of riches and military might. Rather security can only be guaranteed by just relations between nations and between peoples. The other lesson to learn is that the security and safety of the few will be an illusion until the security of the majority can also be realised.

The reality of September 11th compels us to ask again

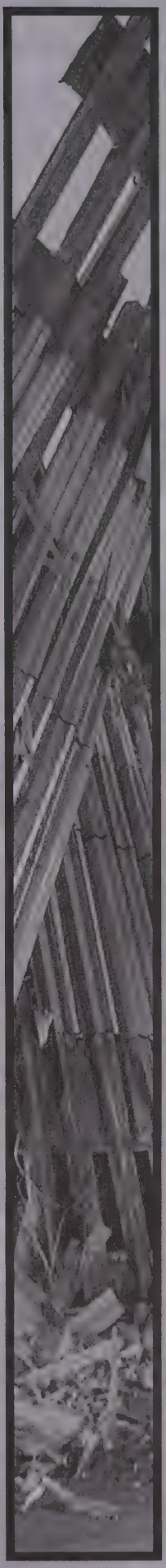
what kind of world human beings have been busy building in the preceding centuries of the second millennium and whether it serves humanity well to maintain the status quo.

While Africa might consider it as a noble duty to join the world in condemnation of the perpetrators of the terrible events of September 11th, Africans should also feel ethically bound and gather the courage to tell the Americans and their European allies to review their foreign policies and the way they have hitherto been running the world. Their policies towards Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) for instance, have in no small measure, directly and indirectly caused the death of millions of innocent people. The current war in the DRC, which is a legacy of the American and Belgian involvement, has claimed the lives of an estimated three million people.

If the twenty-first century will be a time to right the wrongs of the previous centuries, then it must be characterised by repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. The unacknowledged and unrepented wrongs of the past must be dealt with honestly and fully in order to recover the dignity of the victims and reclaim the humanity of the perpetrators. That would be a huge step towards the realisation of restorative justice.

In this context even the church needs to repent. The church has contributed to the building of a world that perpetuates injustice, oppression and exploitation. Even in Africa the church has served as a lubrication of the wheels of oppression during the colonial period. In the post-colonial time some sections of the church in Africa have condoned despotic leadership and sanitised political tyrants. But the church, at all levels including internationally, must insist on ethical dimensions of relations between nations.

Excerpt from an address by Samuel Kobia at the 2001 graduation of St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru. Rev. Dr Sam Kobia, from Kenya, is executive director of the Cluster on Issues and Themes of the World Council of Churches.



Behind the news: Visions for peace - voices of faith

In response to the threatening global situation in the wake of the September 11 attacks in the United States, the World Council of Churches (WCC), Action by Churches Together (ACT) and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance have agreed to set up a short-term response mechanism to share information with our broad church constituency with a particular focus on church voices and other alternative perspectives to the Northern media.

Specifically, this common mechanism is intended to:

- Discern and interpret the signs of the times from perspectives different than the dominant discourse, in particular from churches and ecumenical and inter-faith partners,
- To nurture hope and strengthen commitment for peace and justice,
- To give voice to those who suffer most and help them to cope in these times of crisis,
- To provide solid analysis and selected resources to strengthen ecumenical action and study,
- Eventually to propose common ecumenical actions.

While there is no shortage of information which is circulating in light of the attacks and US/international response, we thought it would be useful to offer as a service to our constituencies a selection of useful information, thought-provoking reflections, and worship resources which might aid in church responses to the unfolding situation.

Documents will be posted on a special section of the WCC website and a regular e-mail bulletin in English with links to the website will be distributed to our various networks. The website and the bulletins will be called ***Behind the news: Visions for peace - voices of faith***. The bulletin will select and summarise statements, resources and actions and draw people to the website where the full versions of the documents will be made available. The website's address will be *http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews* . To subscribe to the e-mail bulletin, contact: *bulletins@wcc-coe.org* .

Given the dominance of Northern media in reporting developments, priority will be placed on circulating:

- Statements and action plans by churches, ecumenical bodies, and church-related organisations in other regions, particularly Asia and the Middle East;
- Analyses and reflections from members of our constituency which have not been widely shared, particularly those which offer alternative perspectives on the situation;
- Relevant analyses and reflections from representatives of other faith communities and from international organisations which provide fresh insights or new information of use to our constituency;
- Worship resources and theological reflections on the situation as it emerges.

SISTERS

This section is dedicated to news from the SISTERS network *(Sisters in the Struggle to Eliminate Racism and Sexism)*. This network enables women to link up and exchange their experiences, generating solidarity, supporting one another through concrete actions. Its members come from churches as well as from groups and movements in civil society committed to eliminate racism and sexism.

was Durban a failure?

By Betty Ruth Lozano

The answer to this question depends to a large extent on the expectations we brought with us to the conference. In fact, people came with great hopes and expectations, some exaggerated, others more in touch with reality. Expectations were not only running high because of what might happen at the conference (we had a foretaste of that at the Prepcoms)[1]; for many of us this was our first time in the continent of Africa, the continent of our ancestors. Someone in Durban asked me, "Do you find it very moving to be in Africa for the first time?" I had to admit that, unfortunately, I did not really feel anything, because it was just like home: Black youths selling fruit at the traffic lights, Black women selling fruit and other trinkets in the streets, Black people of all ages and both sexes doing the most degrading jobs, Black street children, most of the Black population living in the poorest districts. In short, a Third-World country where the Black population grows poorer every day as a result of privatisation policies and a long heritage of marginalisation and poverty. Even though apartheid has been legally abolished, the same happened as with the legal abolition of slavery in America – the Black population received no reparations or compensation to give them a better start in their struggle for survival.

But things were not all bad, even though the United Nations Organisation (UN) seemed to be doing its best to give everyone a sense of failure – for instance, by failing to supply the interpreters that were needed both for the NGO forum and for the conference itself. Perhaps those who can communicate in English have never experienced the anguish of not being able to understand or make oneself understood. Among the participants from Colombia there was no-one of African or Indigenous descent who could communicate fluently in English, even in the official delegation. This has serious repercussions on the quality of participation – you can only participate up to a certain point. You cannot contribute as you would like to nor participate fully in the discussions as you had hoped – and you are dependent on other people. When documents were translated, the translations arrived late and many were of poor quality. This is not just a failure of communication, it is more than that. It amounts to the imposition of a linguistic hegemony which refuses to allow any other language to be used; one language setting itself up as the global language. Yet, as Fidel Castro said in his speech at the closing session of the NGO forum, we have to learn it in order to resist it. Along with other Latin friends I was able to take part in a workshop entitled "United to end racism". The experience we all shared was the sense of oppression we felt because of the domination of English. Some of the people there could communicate perfectly well in that language, indeed better than in Spanish, yet they saw this as an impoverishment and not a gain. There is a challenge here for all of us who do not speak English: how can we speak it without losing ourselves, how can we master it without allowing it to colonise us? I believe we have to work on the principle of constant resistance.

SISTERS

A section of the protest march through the streets of Durban during the UN World Conference Against Racism. Called by the trade unions of South Africa the march made room for all manner of groups attending the NGO Forum preceding the government conference

© 2001 Paul Weinberg / WCC

Fidel Castro, the President of Cuba, said in his speech that this was a conference on racism, racial discrimination and all the other forms of injustice in this capitalist world covered by the phrase "and related forms of intolerance". In fact, this conference dealt with practically all forms of oppression produced by this discriminatory, racist western culture: discrimination based on gender, caste, racism, sexual orientation, apartheid, disability, etc... In this respect, the input from the gender caucus concerning the intersections of different forms of oppression was extremely important. This concept made it possible to link up the different themes, and counter the assertion that many of them had nothing to do with the central themes of the conference, without losing political strength through fragmentation. Nevertheless, the Indigenous peoples are already proposing to hold a world conference dealing specifically with Indigenous issues as they were not happy about the plethora of themes at this event.

Betty Ruth Lozano © 2001, Paul Weinberg / WCC

Unfortunately, at time of writing, we do not have the final document of the official conference, but it is clear that women of African descent gained more in Durban than they did in Beijing. As far as we were able to follow the final document, it does contain concrete references to our situation as victims, even if it does not take up the concept of intersections (and they still have problems with the concept of gender!). This was a proposal put up for discussion and it remains on the table to be discussed in greater depth in future debates (at both the official and the NGO level). To be sure, this concept of the intersection of the forms of oppression is difficult for most governments to accept, as they see only their particular interests. But – and this has to be said – it is also difficult for some discriminated groups who do not want to be associated with certain others because they consider their own claims will be degraded if they are lumped together with them. The greatest victims of this discrimination by the discriminated, on the whole, are those demanding the right to full expression of their sexual orientation. Very few wish to appear alongside them, so that gender and intersections remain a fiction[2].

So was Durban a failure? Obviously, a world conference cannot eradicate racial discrimination in all its forms but it can make an important contribution. Eliminating racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance requires a transformation in western spirituality, in other words, a change of civilisation which cannot be achieved through a world conference, especially not in the present situation where the United States has set itself up as the supreme and uncontested head of this forum which is the United Nations. So much so that its withdrawal from the conference was seized upon by the communications media as an excuse not only to distort reality but to invent it by alleging that the conference was a failure. Commentaries to the effect that it was in the interests of the United States and the European Union to have the conference fail were already circulating in the corridors of all the Prepcoms.

The many thousands of people from very different backgrounds attending the NGO Forum offered a living image of the rich ethnic and cultural diversity of our planet. For all the different victims of racism, this was a unique opportunity for encounter, for recognition and solidarity or, if you prefer, responsibility, because in the present circumstances in the world it is not a matter of some being saved – either we are all saved, or we all perish. When I first attended the preparatory events for the conference, I had the idea that discrimination and racism were topics that concerned only Black and Indigenous people, and that was the idea I took with me to the preparatory conference for the Americas in Chile. But there we met other groups of people, like the Roma people, of whom I had only a distant notion. I had sometimes seen them in my home-town and in other cities in Colombia, they had even offered to read my palm, I had heard the prejudices against them but, in my mind, they were simply "gypsies".

I thought the Roma people were in Europe and they were something different. So it came as a shock, a slap in the face to find that the representative of the Roma people at the conference in Chile was a Colombian. Then there were the Dalit people in India, millions of people suffering discrimination based on a combination of caste and racism; the discovery that it is an illusion to think that apartheid had disappeared from the world, when the state of Israel is subjecting the Palestinian people to this crime; the meeting with many pale-skinned, blue-eyed Indigenous people from Europe, also suffering discrimination in their countries and regions, and all the other dark-skinned African Indigenous groups; realising that it is not simply a matter of defending the rights of homosexuals but also, as the final declaration of the NGO Forum of the Americas in Chile says, "gays, lesbians and bisexuals, transsexuals and transvestites"; in short, the empirical observation of something we already knew in theory: there are not two genders, but many genders. Well, perhaps not so empirical.

It is fair to say that no ethnic or cultural group obtained everything it was demanding and that some even experienced a set-back, like the Indigenous peoples who did not succeed in having article 27 deleted from the Declaration and the Programme of Action, even though it has repercussions for the rights recognised under international law. Thanks to lobbying by Africans and people of African descent, the final declaration by governments included the acknowledgement that "slavery and the slave trade are crimes against humanity and should always have been recognised as such, especially the transatlantic slave trade." Nevertheless, this aspect of the conference made us aware as never before of the global nature of the phenomenon of racism and we realised that, from the standpoint of the oppressed peoples of the world this is not just one more topic, it is the topic *par excellence*. The resistance coming from the United States also proved that this is the case, for the eradication of racism and racial discrimination touch on the most sensitive interests of first world countries, given that racism and racial discrimination underlay, and continued to underlie, the colonisation, evangelisation and marginalisation of our peoples. Western civilisation considers itself superior to all others and believes it has the moral, "messianic" obligation to save the others by colonising and evangelising them. So this is not simply a problem of educating the population not to be racist, nor is it simply a question of peaceful coexistence between "Whites" and "the others". It is a problem which has its roots in the economy that justifies the unequal distribution of wealth, determines geopolitical strategies etc. This is why the countries of the first world were not interested in accepting the linkage between poverty, colonial past and slavery, nor in adopting motions in favour of the Palestinian people, or including the Dalits on the list of victims.

The World Conference against Racism should not be seen as an event which took place in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 7 September of this year, but as a process which started from the moment the United Nations General Assembly decided in 1977 to hold this conference. Perhaps even before then, because the lobbying of the UN by various NGOs over a period of years helped to bring about this event. The process has involved many encounters which have brought us face to face with our own prejudices, and the prejudices of others. It has enabled us as organisations of people of African descent to look inward at ourselves, and we have often felt challenged by what we saw. For me the end result is our own growth as persons, as organisations, as networks. We cannot be the same after all we have experienced, with all the loves and hatreds. This process has contributed to many things and this could represent a substantial part of what this conference has achieved – plus the fact that we are certainly better prepared to tackle the next one! Let's start work on it now!

Betty Ruth Lozano is a woman of African descent born in Cali, Colombia. She was a member of the WCC delegation at the various preparatory events and at the conference in Durban. She is a sociologist.

Notes:

1. The abbreviation for the official preparatory meetings for the World Conference.

2. At the last Prepcom in Geneva, for example, (30 July to 10 August) the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) was refused accreditation at the Conference. As was to be expected, the main opposition came from Islamic countries but the majority of Asian countries also voted against, on the grounds that ILGA's work had nothing to do with the themes of the Conference. Very few Latin American countries voted in favour, either, even though their patrons, the USA and the EU, did so.

Translated from spanish
WCC language service

WCC PUBLICATIONS

THE HIDDEN SHAME OF THE CHURCH
Sexual Abuse of Children and the Church
by Ron O'Grady

Since founding ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism), an international organisation working to end child prostitution and pornography, in 1991, the author has sadly come to recognise that church leaders and representatives are not exempt from involvement in the sexual abuse of children. Although working in a secular and apolitical organisation, the author's Christian belief and experience have informed this study of a deeply disturbing phenomenon. He seeks, through unsensational language, to expose the truth of the church's involvement and by so doing to start the search for solutions.

Ron O'Grady founded ECPAT in 1991. The organisation works to end child prostitution, pornography and trafficking in children. ECPAT now operates in 60 countries.

Risk Book Series, WCC Publications, Geneva,
Price: approx. Sfr. 9.90, US$6.50, £4.50, €6.50,
ISBN 2-8254-1349-6.

COMMUNICATION AND RECONCILIATION,
Challenges facing the 21st Century
Philip Lee, ed.

The vital role of communication in achieving reconciliation is undeniable. But how do we communicate? Amazingly, in our high-tech world the question is as valid as ever, as the communities caught up in conflict, prejudice and exploitation will testify.

Communication and Reconciliation explores this theme through a range of experiences. The determination of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina not to be silenced; the experience of Estonia where re-establishing the mother tongue is helping to rebuild the country and interethnic relations following the collapse of the Soviet Union; and the lessons to be learned by the churches in Canada from the First Nations peoples' belief in the "spirit of community", are some of the stories in this uplifting exploration of how we create "a culture of dialogue" and in turn, reconciliation, which is at the heart of the Christian message.

Philip Lee is a senior staff member of the World Association for Christian Communication, London, UK.

ERRATA:

An error slipped into our text in the last issue (no. 19 "the Challenge of People with Disabilities") in the Publications' section. The publication "Facing Aids – The Challenge, The Churches' Response" is not by Theo Tschuy.

JPC PUBLICATIONS

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION
Churches' Response to the Policies of International Financial Institutions

is a document prepared by an ecumenical group composed of theologians, economists, financial experts, sociologists and ecologists. This document highlights essential areas for consideration by churches as they engage themselves in responding to the policies of the World Bank, the IMF and the challenges of globalisation. As the wind of globalisation blows, some churches are strong enough to meet the challenge of the global forces while others are in a state of powerlessness and unable to make a fresh critical review of economic and social questions that confront us today. The aim of the document is, therefore, to serve as a point of reference on how churches can deal with the ongoing relationships being created between the World Bank and the churches.

This publication was announced in the issue no. 18 of Echoes. It is now ready and can be ordered from the JPC team.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

WAR PREVENTION WORKS

Published by the Oxford Research Group

In the hills above Tetovo, Macedonia, an uneasy ceasefire threatens to unravel at any minute. In Burundi, Hutu-Tutsi co-existence is punctuated by Hutu-Tutsi violence. In Colombia, local communities are caught in the ongoing conflict between the government and the FARC. In violent conflicts around the world, the same question is always heard: What can be done?

While the eyes of the world look to politicians and diplomats to halt the bloodshed, away from the glare of the world's media, thousands of ordinary people are doing quite extraordinary things: they are working to prevent violence, contain conflicts and end wars. *War Prevention Works*, published by Oxford Research Group tells their story. Covering over 30 conflicts ranging from inter-community disputes to inter-state wars and dating from 1946 to the present day these powerful stories, some of which are being told here for the first time, show what ordinary people, non-governmental organisations, church groups and many others are able to achieve. *War Prevention Works* is a valuable resource for practitioners, decision makers, students and activists alike.

Copies can be ordered from: Oxford Research Group,
51 Plantation Road, Oxford OX2 6JE, UK.
Tel +44-1865-242 819 – Fax: +44-1865-794 652
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DEVELOPMENT BOOKS BY POST

2001/2 Catalogue of the Intermediate Technology Development Group.

This catalogue offers an unbiased, wide and up-to-date selection of key development-related titles from around the world from different publishers, and contains many seminal texts on development issues.

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THE FUTURE IN THE BALANCE

Essays on globalisation and resistance

by Walden Bello

Third-World activist and scholar Walden Bello is one of the most astute and ardent critics of the international financial institutions. His new collection of essays, *The Future in the Balance*, clearly and eloquently explains the true causes of the financial crisis – the institutions that advocated free market economies based on the principles of liberalisation, deregulation, and privatisation. Bello tells the truth about the World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and their grip on the Third-World. He shatters the myths of development as prescribed by these institutions and offers the possibility of another world based on fairness and justice.

Co-published by Food First Books and Focus on the Global South.
Distributed by LPC Group, 1436 West Randolph Street, Chicago, IL 60607, ***www.coolbooks.com****.*
ISBN 0-935028-84-6, $13.95.

Copies of ECHOES can be ordered from the JPC publications office at the WCC. The average cost of producing and mailing ECHOES is US$5.00 per copy (equivalent to approx. 7.-Sfr.). Readers who can afford it are strongly encouraged to contribute. However, **please note** that any contributions under Sfr20.- (US$ 15.00) actually costs more to cash than it is worth.

Individuals willing to express their commitment to the Justice, Peace and Creation team may also contribute in the same way.

Please make payment either by cheque in the name of the WCC or to the following bank accounts with a very clear mention that it is for ECHOES - magazine, JPC:

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